

Representing 'the people' – The National Discourse in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand how nationalist elites in Zimbabwe have constructed an idea of the nation over time. It builds on other analyses of the Zimbabwe crisis that privilege the importance of analysing how nationalist elites represent a specific image of the nation, 'the people', and their history, and how this representation inflects political practice in the country. It departs from these studies by applying this approach historically, tracing how an elite configured discourse of the nation has been constructed since the emergence of mass nationalism in the 1950's. This allows an understanding of how this discourse produces a set of resilient social categories and practices, and shapes how events in contemporary Zimbabwe can be interpreted and represented. In order to do reach this understanding I employ a theoretical approach that conceives of an elite constructed 'national discourse', a system of representation that produces a framework by which a nation can be constituted, or imagined, and by which certain events, objects or circumstances can be interpreted as 'national'. This study traces how nationalist elites began to conceive of 'Zimbabwe', its history and culture, and charts how an image of 'the people' was produced, and the construction of the privileged category of the 'national hero'. It then shows how in the 1980's a specific meaning of 'national unity' shaped elite rhetoric and practice on the policy of reconciliation, the state-sponsored terror in Matabeleland, and the one-party state agenda, before analysing how discourses of modernisation and technical development produced a different way of thinking about land. It then illustrates how the histories, images and practices of the national discourse have intensified in the period of the third *Chimurenga*. Much commentary on the crisis has been marked by a dichotomy between a radical redistributive project based on indigenous location and historical sanction, and a liberal critique focusing on human rights, the rule of law and ideas of citizenship. This set of polarities has been both reinforced by, and helped to produce, the character of the national discourse in contemporary Zimbabwe.

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Introduction

A broad consensus has emerged, amongst academics and more widely, that since the late 1990's Zimbabwe has been undergoing a crisis. This crisis is, as Raftopoulos puts it, 'a particular configuration of political and economic processes that has engulfed the country and concentrated the attention of the region' (Raftopoulos, 2004: viii). Broadly speaking there has been a vivid disturbance in economic, political, and social structures within Zimbabwe, concentrated around and stemming from a rise in civil and political opposition to the ZANU-PF government, the increased political activity of war veterans, the much documented land invasions, the authoritarian reaction of the Zimbabwean state, and the severe deterioration of the economy¹.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the current crisis, in which an incumbent liberation party has faced viable political opposition from a newly emerged political movement. What has become clear is that ZANU-PF have constructed an idea of the nation, rooted in their version of its history, which casts an image of legitimacy over their rule in the face of political opposition, and paints that opposition as part of this history (Ranger, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Muzondidya, 2007, 2004; Raftopoulos, 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The MDC and other civil society organisations have been presented as agents of the imperial west, and therefore the climate of political contestation between the two parties has seen the issue of historical legitimacy become a dominant theme. The opposition to ZANU-PF rule has to campaign not only against the policies of ZANU-PF, but also against its conception of the nation, and therefore the conception of itself as an illegitimate and non-indigenous movement. At the same time certain groups, including whites and MDC supporters, are finding themselves discursively excluded from the nation, and their claims to representation unrecognised. The way in which nationalist elites conceive of the nation in contemporary Zimbabwe has prevented a constructive and tolerant dialogue over Zimbabwean identities, and has recast discourses of rights, justice and citizenship in a racialised language of historical sanction and indigenous entitlement (Raftopoulos, 2004; Muzondidya, 2007).

This study seeks to critically interrogate this process. It takes as its cue a commonly observed feature of post-2000 nationalism in Zimbabwe, that the way in which ZANU-PF have presented an idea of the Zimbabwean nation and its history has precedence, that it is a 'revival' of a previously established way of talking about and acting upon political and historical realities. More explicitly, there are significant parallels between the nationalism of the 1960's and 1970's and that of the post-2000 era. What I want to consider is how has the image of the Zimbabwean nation been constructed by nationalist elites over time? By tracing how nationalist elites have historically presented a discourse of the nation we can then try to understand what constitutes this 'revival', how this discourse has shaped ways in which events in

¹ For a more substantial look at the constitutive processes of the crisis see the opening section of chapter four.

contemporary Zimbabwe have been interpreted and represented. By understanding the discursive history of how nationalist elites have represented an idea of 'the people' and their history we can also understand the resilience of the social categories and practices that this representation produces. At the same time we can see how nationalist elites have required this representation to give life to their political claims and projects.

This paper seeks to address these problems, and in doing so provides a different way of understanding the crisis in Zimbabwe. To a large extent it builds upon but also diverges from other intellectual analyses. Instead of focussing on policy decisions by ZANU-PF, or the nature of the Zimbabwean state, or conceiving of an authoritarian governmental response to a viable political opponent, this study seeks to frame the crisis differently. I want to understand post-2000 Zimbabwe as a struggle to define the nation itself. In this sense we are not just seeing a ZANU-PF government attempting to maintain political and economic power, but also attempting to maintain a specific way of representing the Zimbabwean nation, its people, and its history.

To develop a theoretical approach appropriate to this endeavour this study begins with a review of some of the more prominent theories of nations and nationalism. Identifying the key debates in the history of the study of nationalism from the perennial school to the ethno-symbolists, and from the modernist school to those who conceive of the nation as a construct, I end with a discussion of the Sub-Altern Studies Group. In doing so I outline the development of a way of conceiving of a 'national discourse', in which anti-colonial nationalist elites present a framework that produces a set of boundaries by which a nation can be constituted, or imagined, and by which certain events, objects or circumstances can be interpreted as 'national'. This discourse is a system of representation, a way in which historical narratives, collectivities, symbols, images and practices cohere around an idea of 'the nation', and this in turn delimits future interpretations of political realities.

Through the following chapters this approach is used to historically trace the development of a 'national discourse' in Zimbabwe. The second chapter looks at the emergence of the national discourse in the rhetoric and political practices of the emerging mass-nationalist parties, charting how they began to conceive of 'Zimbabwe', its history and its culture, with particular reference to how ideas of 'the people' were represented, and constructions of the privileged category of 'national hero'. The third chapter looks at post-independence Zimbabwe. Firstly it discusses how a specific conception of 'national unity' shaped elite rhetoric on the policy of reconciliation, the disturbances in Matabeleland, and the one party state agenda. It then considers how discourses around modernisation and technical development produced different ways of thinking about land, contradictory to how it was imagined in national history. The last chapter covers post-2000 Zimbabwe, specifically trying to understand how elite representations of national history and nationhood were shaped by already existing frames of reference. It also considers

how this 'revival' was both reinforced by, and helped produce, the dichotomies that have marked much of the commentary and rhetoric on the crisis in Zimbabwe: on one side a radical redistributive political project based on historical sanction and native entitlement, on the other a universalistic critique emphasising human rights, the rule of law and citizenship, often conflated with neo-imperialism.

ONE

Zimbabwe, Nations and Nationalism

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of how different interpretations and explanations of the crisis in Zimbabwe have gained prominence, in both academic and popular commentary. In doing so it highlights how this study will diverge from many of these approaches, and instead try and build upon those that have sought to more closely examine how ZANU-PF's presentation of the nation has informed political practice in Zimbabwe. In doing so it is necessary to take the nation, or more specifically, how elites have historically conceived of the nation, as the central focus of analysis. With this in mind a historical review of the theories of nations and nationalism is provided, ending by placing this study within an approach that conceives of a 'national discourse'.

Understanding the crisis in Zimbabwe

In trying to understand the crisis many observers have fixed their gaze solely on the Zimbabwean President. Recent journalistic works have used a loosely psychological analysis, centred on descriptions of personal characteristics and behaviour through the President's life, to explain the dictatorial inclinations of Robert Mugabe (Blair, 2003; Holland, 2008; Meredith, 2002; Norman, 2008). As well as being largely speculative these studies are often metonymic. By this I mean Mugabe becomes the focus of analysis, and so comes to symbolise the crisis itself. It is largely explained through his actions, choices and character traits. This neglects the complex constellation of historical and social factors that give the crisis its character. Popular presentations of the Zimbabwe crisis in both African and international media has tended to focus on a more simple and ahistorical conception. Focussing on the farm invasions, political violence, and the disregard for the rule of law and liberal norms of democratic practice, these accounts amount to what Worby calls a charting of Zimbabwe's 'retreat from modernity' (Worby, 2003: 67). Both readings complement each other, cohering around the image of an authoritarian leader presiding over a regression of the norms of liberal governance. This position has been most evident in the Western media, the liberal press in Southern Africa, and independent press within Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos, 2006: 1).

At the same time another polarity has emerged that tends to read events in Zimbabwe after 2000 as a radical political project overseeing the redistribution of national resources in the face of neoliberal

imperialism, and emphasises a history of injustice and dispossession as the justification of this program. This position has been dominant in state controlled media in Zimbabwe, and amongst some sympathetic groups and organisations internationally (Raftopoulos, 2006: 1).

These polarities have raised important questions in academic commentary on the crisis in Zimbabwe, most notably within the heated debates amongst traditionally leftist scholars². There has been a noticeable divide between those who emphasise the importance of human rights and democratic practice and highlight the authoritarian nature of the state while remaining critical of neo-liberal conceptions of 'civil society', and those who support the structural changes brought on by the land reform process while remaining wary of elite accumulation and democratic marginalisation in its processes.

The second position is perhaps best exemplified in the work of Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros. These scholars have, through a largely class-based structural analysis, defended the land invasions as a popular revolution that sought to overthrow historical inequalities, and see a civil society based opposition movement that is ideologically and materially tied to neoliberal values as incapable of achieving this necessary social transformation. For these scholars Zimbabwe is a radicalised state battling against neo-liberal orthodoxy, although they remain wary of how bourgeoisie interests within the party have co-opted the reforms, and lament that the 'revolutionary situation' in Zimbabwe remained focussed on 'a single issue' and did not radicalise urban workers or farm workers (Moyo and Yeros, 2007a, 2007b).

The first position, which similarly uses a political-economy analysis to understand the nature of the crisis in Zimbabwe, can be more broadly aligned to scholars like Brian Raftopoulos, Ian Phimister and Patrick Bond. Raftopoulos and Phimister have sought to challenge Moyo and Yeros by emphasising the authoritarian nature of the state and highlighting elite processes of accumulation within it, and by trying to understand the crisis as part of the wider international political economy, paying particular attention to the role of South African economic interest and how ZANU-PF's radical politics finds solidarity with other political leaders on the continent (Raftopoulos, Phimister, 2004a, 2004b). Bond and Manyana situate the crisis in a history of neoliberal economic reform, state corruption and mismanagement, and classic capitalist crisis (Bond, Manyana, 2002).

Leaving aside the debates on the left, some other analysts have sought to critically outline how in an increasingly authoritarian political climate there has been a collapse of democratic space in Zimbabwe that

² For a more detailed look at these debates see Raftopoulos (2006), and Moore (2004). A recent article by Mahmood Mamdani in the *London Review of Books*, which drew much empirical data and critical insight from the work of Moyo and Yeros, provoked a raft of responses from scholars of Zimbabwean politics and history, and so highlighted how the sheer urgency of the crisis has produced a heated intellectual atmosphere and a set of divergent positions (Mamdani, 2009; Jacobs, 2009; Raftopoulos, 2009; Scarnecchia, T. et al, 2009).

has seen a dramatic and chronic reduction in human rights, liberties and democratic practice, and the marginalisation of the rule of law and the independent press (Scarnecchia et al, 2009; Raftopoulos, 2009; IJR, 2006, Goredema, 2004; Rupiya, 2004; Chuma, 2004). Many accounts have adopted a more multi-layered approach, seeking to understand in greater detail the specifics of the crisis in Zimbabwe, and the authoritarian and patriarchal politics that underpins it, all in a historical context (Hammar, Raftopoulos, Jensen, 2003; Campbell, 2003). These accounts have critically documented the emergence of a 'party-state' in Zimbabwe over a longer period (Hammar, 2003; Alexander, 2003, 2006), and complicated the issue of land reform by critically investigating the competing agendas of its participants, highlighting how elites had benefitted from it, and exploring the negative effects on many commercial farm workers (Alexander, 2006; Sachikonye, 2003, 2004; Rutherford, 2008; Cousins, 2003; Marongwe, 2003). Norma Kriger has provided detailed studies examining more closely the agendas of war veterans, and their role in Zimbabwean politics (Kriger, 2003, 2005, 2006). Scholars have also attempted to bring to light the international dimensions of the crisis, situating it in a wider debate over Zimbabwean foreign policy (Chan, Patel, 2007).

At the same time some analysts have explicitly identified the importance of how nationalist elites in Zimbabwe have presented a specific and powerful idea of the nation and its history. These studies move away from those listed above by placing an emphasis on the 'nation', and how representations of it have important ramifications for the politics of identity, citizenship, and legitimacy. Departing from studies that revolve around analytical categories such as class, state, or party, they explicitly try to understand the importance of how a conception of the nation has implications on political practice. Terence Ranger has identified what he calls 'patriotic history', a way in which a dominant narrative of national history has emerged in Zimbabwe that seeks to curtail more nuanced and challenging histories and to exclude certain political positions (Ranger, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Raftopoulos has built on this approach, showing how this presentation of national history has legitimised the land reform process, and reinforced categories of national exclusion for a variety of different groups. It has also tied authoritarian redistributive politics in Zimbabwe to a wider idea of Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism (Raftopoulos, 2003, 2004). James Muzondidya has shown how ZANU-PF's conception of a singular, essentialised 'African' as the sole authentic national subject has had profound implications for other minority groups in the country (Muzondidya, 2004, 2007)³.

³ During the writing of this project I was made aware of the recent work of Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, who in his recently published work *Do Zimbabweans Exist?* (2009), draws from a range of post-modernist theory to try and deconstruct the 'national project' in Zimbabwe. The author kindly forwarded me a copy of his then unpublished manuscript (2008), and this has proved a valuable resource in terms of insights, sources and references. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's work is a far more ambitious project than my own. It critically investigates a broad range of imaginings of the nation throughout the history of Zimbabwe, with significant emphasis on those 'readings' of the nation that have been suppressed. He also provides an analysis of the legacy of violence in Zimbabwean politics, the history of

These studies privilege the importance of understanding how elites have constructed an image of the nation and its history, and this study can be aligned with this approach. However, whereas the works above concentrate on elite constructions of the nation in contemporary Zimbabwe this study instead seeks to frame this process historically, to illustrate that the ways in which nationalist elites in Zimbabwe present and practice a national discourse can only be understood by showing how this discourse was historically constructed.

The links between past and present depictions of the nation and national history have been noted by these scholars. Raftopoulos points to the 'historical resonance' of liberation histories, and that 'the ruling party placed a strong emphasis on reviving the narrative of the liberation struggle in general and the heroic roles of ZANU-PF and Mugabe in particular' (Raftopoulos, 2004: 165). In a brief article in which he discusses the categories of 'traitor' and 'sell out' and proclamations of loyalty to the nation in the intra-party conflict of the 1960's, Ranger conceded that 'Patriotic [history]... is a revival... When I spoke about its 'rise', I ought to have talked about its 'return'" (Ranger, 2005a: 11).

However, as these studies focus explicitly on the contemporary period, this 'revival' is only made reference to, and never systematically analysed. This study seeks to fill such a gap. In doing so it has three broad objectives. Firstly it seeks to situate an elite-driven national discourse in a historical context, showing how it has always been discursively required by elites as a means of understanding their role as 'leaders', and their representation of the masses as 'national subjects'. Secondly, it attempts to show how the way in which elites construct the nation has inflected politics in Zimbabwe since independence, and how this has changed in different historical circumstances. Thirdly it aims to provide a stronger understanding of the post-2000 national discourse by illustrating how elite constructions of 'the people', land, and national history, are in fact intensifications of previously established modes of interpretation.

This of course requires a specific way of thinking about nationalism and nations. If the object of study is the way in which national elites have constructed an idea of the nation, and how such ideas shape political practice, then what is needed is a theoretical approach that allows us to conceive of the nation in this way. The Zimbabwean case illustrates the importance of an approach that allows for us to understand the nation as a construct of political elites, a system of the representation of histories, images, and collectivities, that shape how certain events, actions and circumstances can be conceived of as 'national'. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how events in post-2000 Zimbabwe have been

Ndebele particularism, the evolution of what he calls 'Mugabeism', and tries to critically understand the current politics of transition in light of this. My own work does share with his an interest in how nationalist elites 'imagined' the nation in Zimbabwe, and despite the limitations of this work in terms of length and scope, I hope that in this sense it complements his study.

presented through a set of 'national' claims, a specific framework of interpretation that reads political realities as part of a national history, and the Zimbabwean people as a specific kind of 'national subject'. The following section reviews the existing theoretical literature on nationalism and nations, and ends by aligning my study with the Sub-Altern Studies Group and more modern theoretical approaches that conceive of a 'national discourse'.

Theories of Nations and Nationalism

In recent decades the volume of writing on nationalism has significantly risen, building on the realisation that 'what is certain now is that any comprehensive analysis of current economic, cultural and political developments cannot avoid addressing the attendant role of nations and nationalisms' (Day, Thompson, 2004: xi). A growing number of scholars from a variety of disciplines have produced a vast and vital critical literature on the subject. The following theoretical review is afflicted by the necessity of summation in light of the length of this study⁴. It thus broadly outlines some of the more influential debates within the literature in order to map out a theoretical approach for the analysis of nationalism in Zimbabwe, and ends with some of the more modern literature which informs my understanding of a 'national discourse'.

A helpful way of understanding the debate at the centre of much of this area of study is to situate it within the following core question: what is the historical periodization of nations, and what is the relationship between the past and the present in the formation and future of nations? This is of course crucial to the Zimbabwean case, where we want to understand how the conception of the nation evolved through the liberation struggle, and how this past has delimited how the nation is conceived of in the present.

The Perennialists and the Ethnosymbolic school

Broadly speaking the perennialist school of thought argues that nations have been around for a long time, but have taken very different forms and shapes throughout history. The perennialists argue that today's nations, and even their nationalisms, can be traced back several centuries, if not millennia. In the post-war era Hugh Seton-Watson argued that nations could be divided into those that were modern and novel (Eastern Europe, Asia and colonial states) and the old continuous nations who could trace their heritage back to the middle ages (Western and Northern Europe). This dating of nations back to the breakup of

⁴ A comprehensive review of such a large and diverse field is no easy task, and the organisation of the following section owes much to the following excellent and in depth summaries of the field: Day, Thompson, 2004; Ozkirimli, 2000; Smith, 1998)

the Roman Empire has gained strong currency amongst many nationalism scholars and led to numerous efforts to date other nations to a similar period (Smith, 2000: 37).

For Adrian Hastings the origin of many nations could be traced back even further, to the first great nation, England and its Anglo-Saxon kings at war with the Danes. His thesis is that nations are ethnic in origin, and come about when ethnicities produce vernacular written literatures and are affected by the pressure of the state, and that the model for their nationhood comes from the Jewish nation presented in the Old Testament. Because Christianity is the only religion that allowed vernacular languages nations are thus a Christian phenomenon, and when ethnic groups felt threatened they generated nationalisms to aid their defence (Smith, 2000). Although Hastings's thesis is unique, it underlines the central point for the perennial school, that nations and nationalism have no necessary connection with modernity and modernisation.

Ethnosymbolism is an attempt that not so much tries to locate nations within a historical period as to provide historical links between modern nations and nationalism, and earlier collective identities and sentiments. It stresses the importance of antecedents to what we see as modern nations, which, although not contradictory with the idea that many nations are novel and that nationalism is a modern ideology, does stand against the idea that nations themselves are a modern phenomena. Anthony Smith is the most well known and prolific of the ethno-symbolic school. He draws attention to the idea of an *ethnie*, 'a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of shared culture, a link with a homeland, and a measure of solidarity' (Smith, 2000: 65). To Smith a nation shares with an *ethnie* a common name, myth or memory, but is also defined by the historic territory it occupies and by its public culture and common law. *Ethnies* do not have to occupy their homeland, and have a mass public culture that encompasses its members. Thus Smith argues that this distinction allows for us to see how nations have developed beyond single *ethnies*, can subsume other *ethnies*, or can accommodate diverse new *ethnies* in a multicultural nation (Smith, 1998: 183). Thus we can have a view of history that accommodates a history of both nations and *ethnies*, and the complex interaction between the two can be traced back centuries.

This approach is underlined by the large significance given to socio-cultural and historic symbols, myths, memories of origin and homeland, and how these re-emerge as interactions between the past and the modern nation. For example a nation could be traced back to a later date, like Armenia in the fifth century, and is simply reoccurring in a different form. In another sense we can trace elements of continuity between different aspects of the nation, like institutional arrangements, memories of certain events or legal standardisation. A third process linking the nation to the past would be in the appropriation of, through rediscovery and authentication, aspects of what later generations consider their ethnic past, creating an allegory with the past (Smith, 2000: 64). This is a common theme of modern

nationalist movements, allowing nationalists to give a convincing representation to their designated compatriots.

The Nation as Modern

The perennialist and ethnosymbolic school of thought can be differentiated from the modernist school in two important ways. Firstly, it begins any enquiry of nations and nationalism by acknowledging their potential historical duration, and seeks to understand nations by drawing out their antecedents or catalysing processes from a far reaching history. Secondly, in doing so they accept that we can divorce the idea of a nation from more modern historical processes.

The modernists, on the other hand, assert that nationalist ideologies, as well as the system of nation states, are modern, that is, both recent in date and novel in character, that because of this nations and national identities are also recent and novel, and that nations and nationalism find their origin in, or are a product of, modernisation and modernity. They also give a strong formative role to elites, the bearers of nationalism, in creating modern nations.

These assertions are visible in the works of modernist scholars. Elie Kedourie traces the philosophical lineage of nationalist ideology back to the Enlightenment belief in the mastery of reason and the necessity of progress, and Immanuel Kant's emphasis on the self-determination of the national will, but contends that these only find modern form in the discontent of 'marginal men' in 19th century Europe and twentieth century European colonies (Kedourie, 1971). These marginal men were intellectuals who were excluded from power in modern formations of the state, and so set upon nationalist movements to gain this power.

Ernest Gellner's sociological analysis finds no evidence of nations in premodern, agroliterate societies, and instead looks to the specific nature of industrialisation as needing a 'high culture' to successfully function. Thus nationalism is an intrinsic necessity in modernised society, and nationalism is the tool by which modernising elites seek to create nations. Gellner's analysis sees nationalism as a by-product of industrialisation, a necessity for the drivers of modernisation to create an idea that could appeal to all those whom the radical socioeconomic changes of industrialisation were affecting, based on the assertion that nationalism is 'primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (Gellner, 1983: 1). This leads to Gellner's famous comment, adopted by many scholars, that:

'Nations as a God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent... political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that is a reality*' (Gellner, 1983: 48-49)

Hobsbawm helpfully summarises this assertion: 'nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalism, but the other way round' (Hobsbawm, 1990: 10).

For many writers it is the modern professionalised state, powered by capitalism and industrialism, that has necessitated the uptake of nationalist ideology by the elites which exercise or seek to gain control of it (Tilly, 1975; Breuilly, 1994). For Breuilly the appeal of a nationalist doctrine comes only when the forces of capitalist modernisation alienate the absolutist state from civil society. Its promise of the reintegration of state and society appeals to those who are alienated by this division, especially newly educated classes (Breuilly, 1994). For Breuilly nationalism is in essence a political movement generated by the forces of capitalist modernisation which is intent on capturing state power, and attempts to do so by espousing nationalist arguments, which he summarises as:

- a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character
- b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.

(Breuilly, 1994: 2)

Hobsbawm shares Breuilly's insistence on the modern and political aspects of nationalism; 'Nations only exist as functions of a particular kind of territorial state or the aspiration to establish one – broadly speaking, the citizen state of the French Revolution – but also in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development' (Hobsbawm, 1990: 9-10).

Here we can see a particularly visible strand of the debate I mentioned above concerning the historical location of nations. The assertion here is against the idea that nations are perennial social entities which can be located throughout history even if they are not an innate human condition, and even though nationalisms are a recent phenomena, the nation itself was immemorial (Smith, 2000: 27). In contrast, the argument is that modern nations are themselves the product of nationalisms and cannot be detached from the socioeconomic climate and historical conditions from which they emerge. The modernist school of nations and nationalism is aligned with the constructionist literature, which seeks to understand why and how modern nations emerge, and how best to understand them.

The Nation as a Construct

As Anthony Smith notes, 'In the past two decades the idea of the nation as a text to be narrated and an artefact and construct to be deconstructed has gained wide currency' (Smith, 2000: 52). The

constructionist school shares the same assertions of the modernist school outlined above, but builds on these assertions by viewing nations as social constructs and cultural artefacts. Nationalist elites represent these 'inventions' or 'imaginings' of the nation to their designated compatriots.

The constructionist school has been broadly influenced by two important works, which I will discuss briefly below. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* puts forward the idea that we can best understand the nature and appeal of nations by analysing national traditions, which themselves are invented traditions:

'Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past' (Hobsbawm, Ranger, 1983: 1-2)

They are:

'Highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the 'nation', with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation' (ibid.: 13-14)

This is evident in the functional basis of invented tradition assigned to it by the authors. Invented traditions establish social cohesion of groups and real or artificial communities; in doing so they legitimise institutions and relations of authority, and aim to socialise by inculcating beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (Smith, 2000: 119).

Although in many ways dissimilar to Hobsbawm's work Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is regarded a seminal work not just in the constructionist school but in the entire field of nations and nationalism. He emphasises the importance of print capitalism in the dissemination of printed works from the 16th century onwards as linguistic diversity began to wane, and the rise of a reading public to receive representations of an imagined community, and to thus become a nation. To Anderson the nation is an imagined political community, sovereign and cross-class, but remains unique to a specific area and historical time period. Anderson's broad implied theory is supplemented by in depth historical sociological analysis of circumstances in particular areas of culture and period. However this insistence on specific circumstantial elements to the emergence of nations is underlined by an emphasis on the idea of the nation as a narrative of the imagination, a text and discourse to be deconstructed. As Smith notes, the methodological legacy of Anderson's work has been to open up a space in the studies of nationalism

and nations for literary and textual analysis that accepts that discourse and social construction play an important role in the peculiar and changing character of nations. This has pushed the modernist paradigm beyond its original fundamentally sociological and historical causal analysis.

It is important here to also point out Anthony Smith's view that within the modern and constructionist literature there still remains an emphasis on the ideology of nationalism. By ideology he means the set of specific images, symbols and concepts ('the people', 'the homeland', authenticity, destiny and autonomy) that mark them off from other ideologies, like socialism or conservatism. Implicit in the work of the modernist and constructionist school is the acceptance that the state will *use* specific images, cultural artefacts, national histories and other ideas for political purposes, but they also *require* them to give life and meaning to their claims. He uses the example of land:

'The urge to possess land which characterises nationalism, is not confined to its political properties: the land is also the land of 'our ancestors', the historic land, and hence desired for its symbolic value as much as its political empowerment or its economic resources' (Smith, 2000: 92)

Only through images and symbols is it possible to portray and represent an elite conception of the nation, and give that portrayal its sense of significance and distinctiveness. It is here that there is significant congruence with the constructionist and ethno-symbolic schools of nationalism (Smith, 2000: 92).

Postcolonial Nationalism

Responding to the major theoretical approaches above some modern scholars have pointed to a 'theoretical blindness' in the historical basis of these works, namely that they do not reflect the experiences of the subordinated classes of former European colonies. As Eley and Suny note, these scholars have ushered in one of the most important theoretical developments of the last two decades by exploring 'the ways in which even the nation's most generous and inclusively democratic imaginings entail processes of protective and exclusionary positioning against others' (Eley, Suny, 1996: 28). These works, coming most notably from the Sub-Altern Studies Group, moved away from the question of when we can date the nation, to explore history from the vantage point of the subordinated, and so show how the way that postcolonial nations are represented served to suppress the voices of the 'subalterns' (Ozkirimli, 2000: 194).

Figures such as Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee have outlined how nationalist independence movements assumed a bourgeoisie character, their practice always inflected by the political, economic and social structures established during the colonial period, and in doing so fail to adequately

represent the interests of the majority (Chatterjee, 1986; Guha, 1983; Spivak, 1988, 1994). For Chatterjee, anti-colonial nationalism was a 'derivative discourse' in that, although:

'nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonised people: it also asserted that a backward nation could 'modernise' itself while retaining cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based' (Chatterjee, 1986: 30)

Homi Bhabha shares Chatterjee's concern with how Western discourses have been reiterated by anti-colonial nationalism. For Bhabha the effect of colonial power is not to explicitly generate submission or a repression of 'native traditions', but to produce a hybridisation, what he calls 'mimicry' (Bhabha, 1994, 1990). If anti-colonial nationalism is replicating the Western nationalism, then anti-colonial practice is 'a displacement of sorts, a subtle articulation of difference within the semiotic space of the same' (Lazarus, 1999: 133). Colonial mimicry is:

'the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence: in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference' (Bhabha, 1994: 86)

The 'mimicry' of colonial subjects, and their elites, of the colonial power is a means of power over that subject by fortifying the dominance of colonial knowledge. At the same time however it undermines a system of knowledge based on difference, and so becomes a means to challenge colonial power.

In a later work Chatterjee developed his original thesis, and argued against what he saw as Anderson's idea that nationalisms in Asia and Africa were adoptions of a modular form of nationalism established in the Americas and Europe:

'If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?.. The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West' (Chatterjee, 1996: 216)

For Chatterjee the problem is that Anderson and others begin their analysis of anti-colonial nationalism with the quest for political power, when anti-colonial nationalism derives and reproduces much of its discourse from what he calls the *material* domain – that of economics, statecraft, science and technology. In the *material* domain the West is dominant, and so is replicated. However the *spiritual* domain, the home

of the nation's cultural identity, is nationalisms 'sovereign territory', and here it 'refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene'. The result is a significant feat of the imagination, a project that attempts to 'to fashion a 'modern' national culture that is nevertheless not Western' (Chatterjee, 1996: 217). It is here that Chatterjee locates Bhabha's 'difference'; anti and postcolonial nationalism is 'almost the same, but not quite' as Western nationalisms, and for Chatterjee this 'difference' is found in Indian religion and cultural practice, indigenous spirituality that remains largely untouched by Western ideas and colonial governance.

The Nation as Discourse

What are the implications of this work on how we can begin to think about nations and nationalism? Chatterjee, Bhabha and the Sub-Altern Studies scholars share with the constructionist school the idea that the nation is an imagined idea, a discourse that gives meaning to political claims by situating them within the discursive framework of the 'nation'. By situating their analyses in the post-colonial context they highlight how nationalist elites have attempted to present (or imagine) national collectivity that includes all groups in society, and to which these groups have an allegiance. For Spivak in particular, the nation is a 'mode of representation', an elite configuration that attempts to represent the subaltern as a national subject. As Lazarus observes:

'On Spivak's reading, to cast 'the colonised' as such in a historical narrative is to privilege a certain kind of agency, a certain kind of subjectivity and of 'speaking' – that of the *colonised subject* who 'speaks' as a *national(ist)* – and to homogenise and bracket as incidental all other kinds' (Lazarus, 1999: 111)

In this sense we can begin to conceive of a 'national discourse' – a mode of representation of popular social practice. Here I mean discourse in a loosely Foucauldian sense as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49)⁵. More explicitly, a discursive structure can be thought of as a 'systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context' (Mills, 1997: 15). A national discourse in this sense is a framework of interpretation that represents a space in which one can be constituted as 'national'. It is concerned with creating a space in which the 'true' nation can be represented:

'Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true' (Foucault, 1979: 46, quoted in Mills, 1997: 16)

⁵ By 'loosely' I mean that I do not wish to fully engage with a Foucauldian definition of discourse, or discursive structures, in which there is no subject as such outside of the discourse. Instead, aligning more with Anderson and the Sub-altern Studies Group, I want to focus on how a discourse of 'nation' is developed by elites, and how this discourse functions within society.

I am interested here in the idea that a national discourse provides a set of boundaries by which a nation can be constituted, or imagined, and by which certain events, objects or circumstances can be interpreted as 'national'. A national discourse then is a certain way of reproducing what Smith calls the common ideology of nations – a definition of 'the people', the homeland, historical narratives, authenticity – and of representing them as true and vital. In this sense certain historical events, symbols, images, social practices and concepts cohere around an idea of 'the nation', and these delimit how other events can be interpreted. For example certain historical events are represented as sequential, and are discursively bound to each other to form a narrative of a national history, and this in turn delimits how future events can potentially be presented. Or, as Spivak would be interested in, popular uprisings against colonialism are presented as part of a wider national struggle, and those who take part in them as 'national subjects'.

This way of thinking about nations is starting to generate some popularity (see for example Calhoun, 1997; Ozkirimli, 2005). Calhoun provides us with a quite effective way of thinking about a national discourse. For him there are certain rhetorical characteristics of nations, variably identified in the rich history of nationalism outlined above as constitutive ingredients of a nation, but also used by nationalist groups and wider society. These include:

'Boundaries, of territory, population, or both... Direct membership, in which each individual is understood to be immediately a part of a nation and in that respect categorically equivalent to other members... Temporal depth – a notion of the nation as such existing through time, including past and future generations, and having a history... Common descent or racial characteristics... Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory' (Calhoun, 1997: 5)

These can be considered as claims that are made about nations, which vary in content and number from nation to nation, and cannot be used to define a precise definition or an empirically testable description. Instead nations are constituted 'by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilise people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices' (Calhoun, 1997: 5).

This is, I feel, a useful way of thinking about the problem I raised in the introduction to this piece: how has the image of the Zimbabwean nation been constructed by nationalist elites over time? By tracing how an elite-configured discourse of the nation has emerged in Zimbabwe we can better understand its power in shaping how contemporary events in the country have been interpreted and represented. By tracing the discursive history of how the nationalist movement has represented an idea of 'the people' and their history, we can also understand the resilience of the social categories and practices that this representation produces. At the same time we can see how these representations delimit how subjectivities, collectivities and historical events can be interpreted in national terms.

Bhabha and Chatterjee also leave us with a telling question that must be kept in mind when trying to understand anti- and post-colonial nationalism in Zimbabwe. What in the Zimbabwean case constitutes 'the difference' between nationalism as it is conceived of in most Euro-centric theoretical approaches and anti or post-colonial nationalisms? Chatterjee to some extent found an answer in traditional Indian religion, although in Zimbabwe the dominance of Christianity may mean that this 'difference' is located in another form. With this in mind how can we understand what constitutes this 'difference', how did Zimbabwean anti-colonial nationalist elites present a nation that was 'different', that drew from some idea of indigenesness practice and historical location? If on one hand nationalism was a modernising force fighting for political independence and democracy, in what way was this ambition situated within a discourse of indigenous culture or history?

TWO

A Nation and its Heroes

The rise of mass nationalism in Zimbabwe had as its background a diverse political culture, with a large variety of associational activity and political formation. Despite this fact the emerging national discourse rested on two dominant conceptions of what constituted 'the people' of Zimbabwe. Firstly they were imagined as a democratic citizenry, reflecting the political goals of the nationalist movement. But, at the same time, a discourse developed around a 'united African' as a national subject. This primordial figure of native authenticity became historically located in an emerging narrative of an 'African' people. Beginning in Great Zimbabwe it progressed into an unbroken thread of African resistance against colonialism, and the struggle against Rhodesian rule became known as the second *Chimurenga*.

This narrative has at its centre the image of the 'national hero', sacredly endowed with historical legitimacy to lead the nation to its destiny of self-determination. This status has been reified through a system of official memorialisation and historical commemoration, and with it a hierarchy of historical authority and political legitimacy has been discursively constructed. The leaders of ZANU-PF have been placed at its summit, but at the same time the status of 'national hero' wields significant political currency to those who seek to challenge this historical legitimacy.

The emerging 'Zimbabwe'

In his work on the formation of a ruling political class in Zimbabwe David Moore points to a quote that illustrates how in the late 1940's and early 1950's a small, mission school educated, African elite began to illustrate the beginnings of a collective identity of Africans living in Southern Rhodesia based upon national political goals. Quoting from an early Goromonzi school magazine we can see the beginnings of a Zimbabwean 'consciousness' based on an idea of a nation-wide polity:

'(if we) desert our people, who will teach and uplift them?... Only if all educated Africans do their bit to improve their small corner and each unites with the others, fighting the same battle, will we attain the expected goal' (Moore, 1991: 481)

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The political future of this generation lay in the nationalist parties of the 1950's and 1960's, but the origins of pan-territorial nationalism are widely regarded to be found further back in history, in the different interrelations between various earlier forms of political organisation from the late 19th century onwards.

From the Matabele Homeland Society (MHS) that sought an ancestral homeland within the remit of the colonial state, to the Young Ethiopian Manyika Society that campaigned for the rights of their native *chiManyika* language in the face of colonial language harmonisation policies, to the nascent trade union organisations like the Federation of Bulawayo African Trade Unions (FBATU), a complex network of political formations emerged in colonial Southern Rhodesia that were part of an ongoing process of the intercession and configuration of political identity. Included in this were organisations that had already begun to operate on a nationwide political basis, including the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress (SRBC), a conservative organisation fighting for voting and economic rights for those members of the African community able to compete with Europeans (West, 2002). Enocent Msindo observes that:

'Southern Rhodesians of the early 1950's might not have defined themselves as nationalists, nor had they imagined a named nation and its social boundaries. They were not technically Zimbabweans. They had many identities that at times fed into each other, including those based on ethnicity, region, gender and trade union membership' (Msindo, 2007: 273-4)

Although they had in common a genesis provoked through lived encounters with colonial policy, from forced removals to taxation, these social formations drew on various discourses to articulate political demands. These included the appropriation and channelling of localised religious histories into rural self-help societies, the pan-African radicalism of Marcus Garvey, and liberal democratic discourses derived from international connections to The British Fabian society, the liberal movement in Cape Town and the civil rights movement in the USA⁶.

As the historical literature on pre-1950's Rhodesia demonstrates it is difficult and even unnecessary to attempt to identify a linear trajectory from early associational life to broader based nationalism, and more helpful to conceive of the emergence of a complex and constantly negotiated indigenous political culture which provided the organisational and societal grounds for the rise of nationalism. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

⁶ There is an extensive historical and historiographical literature on political formations in pre and post-war Rhodesia. For an analysis of the impact of Garveyism in Zimbabwe see West, 2002b. For a comprehensive history of the rise of a heterogeneous, urban black middle class into nationalist politics see West, 2002a. For a history of early liberalism and democracy in urban Rhodesia see Scameccia, 2008. For a historical analysis of the formation of political identity and nationalism in rural Matabeleland see Ranger, 1999; Alexander, McGregor; Ranger, 2000. For a history of the labour movement see Phimister, Raftopoulos, 1997. Also see Raftopoulos, 1999 for a historiographical review.

highlights the unevenness of this process, citing numerous examples of members seamlessly moving between different organisations, including ethnic, national and others, and exploring how these formations appropriated and adopted different discourses in an ongoing arbitration of a pluralistic political terrain (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 45-50).

By the 1950's the educated elites described by Moore had become the dominant interlocutors of nationalism through the founding of the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC) in 1957, a reconstituted SRBC, and, following its banning, the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1960 (West, 2002: 207-218; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 51). The nationalist parties became a political home for an emerging African elite and often a site of discursive absorption of the array of grievances expressed by the organisations mentioned above, or simply subordinated smaller organisations and interest groups (Raftopoulos, 1999: 125-126).

It is important to note here the obvious heterogeneous origins of nationalist political formation, and the implication that any coherent articulation of nation-ness by it would have to necessarily represent a diverse community of identities, whether ethnic or political. Despite this Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes how the SADC, the NDP and later the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1961, as well as the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) after ZAPU's split in 1963, all affirmed a presumed notion of united citizenship under democratic rule. From the liberal democratic idea of citizenship under the SRANC, to the one-man-one-vote solution to colonialism espoused by ZAPU and ZANU, the nationalist parties presented an idea of 'the people', but more often than not did so in the language of democratic rule. For example the 1965 constitution of ZAPU begins with:

A. Aims and objective:

- i. To establish the policy of one-man-one-vote as the basis of government in this country.
- ii. To maintain the spirit of democracy and love of liberty among the people of Zimbabwe.
- iii. To unite the African people so that they liberate themselves from all forms of imperialism and colonialism.
- iv. To fight relentlessly for the elimination of all forms of oppression.
- v. To create conditions for the economic prosperity of the people under a government based on the principle of one-man-one vote.
- vi. To foster the development of the best values in African culture and traditions, so as to establish a desirable order.

(ZAPU, 1968)

ZANU, despite emphasising differences between the two major nationalist parties, presented a similar formulation of 'the people'. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes, 'its approach to the issue of belonging was not

radical... it defined itself just like ZAPU as 'a non-racial union of all the peoples of Zimbabwe who share a common destiny and a common fate believing in the African character of Zimbabwe and democratic rule by the majority regardless of race, colour, creed or tribe' (ZANU, 1963, quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 80). The national parties began to speak of 'a people' as a discursive entity, a fixed unitary populace on whose behalf they spoke, but what is important here is that the contours and character of this entity is defined in two ways. Central to these definitions are the recurring themes of democracy, unity and 'the African people', and there are significant tensions between them.

Firstly Zimbabwe is presented as a political community that must be fought for, under which a democratic dispensation will allow for a minimal delimitation of who 'the people' are. In this case, a non-racial, democratic imagining of Zimbabwean-ness allows for the formulation of a united citizenship, above other forms of identity like ethnicity, associational membership or race. In this case the nation itself is conceived of as a democratic political community; firstly it is a democratic citizenry under one-man one-vote, but at the same time it is a unified collective in that the political premise of democratic, independent rule unites 'the people' above and beyond other identities present within the territorial body which they seek to liberate.

This is the nationalism espoused by Ndabaningi Sithole, the founder and first leader of ZANU, in his 1959 book *African Nationalism*. Aimed mainly at a sceptical Western audience, it sought to portray nationalism as not against whites but against white supremacy in order to seek a society that looks beyond race and tribe and is built on democratic ideals of freedom and equality (Sithole, 1968). The model is, in Chatterjee's sense, largely 'derivative', drawing from the one-man one-vote model of British parliamentary rule. This translates into majority rule, but the meanings of majority rule had connotations of rule by the majority racial group: rule by Africans. Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU, understood this, and asserted that majority rule 'meant' non-racialism and democracy. To be a national subject was largely defined by being a voter in a democratic society:

'There is talk by some people that 'majority rule' means rule by Africans only; that Africanisation will deprive Europeans of their jobs and that there will be a general lowering of standards. To us majority rule means the extension of political rights to all people so that they are able to elect a Government of their own choice, irrespective of race, colour or creed of the individual forming such a government. All that matters is that a Government must consist of the majority party elected by the majority of the country's voters' (Nkomo, 1964, quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008)

However, present in the early mission statements of the nationalist parties is a pervasive image of 'Africans' and 'African people' as a collectivity. In stressing the need for unity amongst Africans, the discourse is at once acknowledging that this collectivity is not absolute, and yet reaffirming its existence as

the premise on which the nationalist parties operate. To put it differently, a united community of 'Africans' is desirable and unity must be encouraged to truly realise this, and we, the nationalists, speak on behalf of that realisation, that future community. In speaking on its behalf they are thus creating the discursive boundaries, symbols and histories which define its emerging form. Although the democratic ideals form part of this, the heavy emphasis on 'African character', 'African people' and 'the best values in African culture and traditions' being used 'to establish a desirable order', begin to reveal a deepening of this idea of collectivity beyond notions of a united democratic community. At the same they reveal inconsistencies and tensions over what is meant by 'the people'; are they a united citizenry under a democratic dispensation, or does 'majority rule' under this system in fact connote a different conception of 'the people', a united community of 'Africans' that creates a new 'order'? If so what constitutes this 'people', and their 'African character'?

A central symbol for this presentation of 'African' collective unity was the naming of the country Zimbabwe, explicitly endorsed in the titles of the leading nationalist parties. Michael Mawema is generally recognised as using the term Zimbabwe as a signifier of the nation for the first time when addressing a rally of supporters sometime in the early 1960's, when he was president of the NDP (Fontein, 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The archaeological site carries great historical valence as the embodiment of past African achievement, and is generally interpreted as 'national' heritage. As Robert Mugabe noted when opening an extension to the Great Zimbabwe Site Museum in 1988:

'Great Zimbabwe is an important symbol for it shows this generation what we as a people were capable of achieving. It encourages us to reach for greater heights in our fight to rebuild Zimbabwe' (quoted in Fontein, 2006: 119)

At the point of its adoption it also carried great significance as a site of contestation over national belonging. In his extensive anthropological study of Great Zimbabwe Fontein notes that various nationalists and academics point to the fact that the adoption of Zimbabwe as the name of the country in waiting was a reaction against Rhodesian appropriation of its history. From the late 19th century onwards various archaeologists and historians had put forward foreign origin myths for Great Zimbabwe. These theories, and the challenges they received from other academics, are collectively known as the 'Zimbabwe controversy' (Fontein, 2006: 3-13). Kaarlshom (1989) and Chennels (1996) works on Rhodesian settler discourses point out the narrative strategy of Rhodesian nationalism which defined Rhodesian identity as a reaction to constructed ideas of black inferiority and primitiveness (part of the environment rather than a social entity). The institutionalisation of foreign origin stories of Great Zimbabwe as official history by the colonial state points to the symbolic myth of Great Zimbabwe as an early white civilisation as a key element of this discourse. Karlshomm thus argues that according to this narrative the Rhodesians were not invading Zimbabwean land but instead reclaiming lost space, and thus the idea that an ancient white

civilisation was defeated by hordes of black savages became an allegory for the settler community itself (Karlshomm, 1989). As Great Zimbabwe became an important symbol for the nationalist movement, the 'Zimbabwe controversy' returned in a new wave of Rhodesian revisionist literature in the 1960's and 1970's that attempted to reassert the sites foreign origins (Fontein, 2006: 122-123).

The naming of Zimbabwe was then also seen as a reclamation of the origins of the nation, and allegorical of the independence struggle itself. In this sense the ruins became a meaningful trope by which the collective 'people' could be imagined as a historically valid entity.

The second *Chimurenga*

During the period of Great Zimbabwe's elevation to national symbolism within the liberation movement historians began to utilise oral histories in order to understand the African past, and many of these became central texts of the national discourse. By highlighting the past rebellions of ancestral figures like Chaminuka, Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi against colonial rule, they traced a linear genealogy of African rebellion. Terence Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (1967) was particularly influential in its focus on the roles played by Nehanda and Kaguvi in Mashonaland, and the *Mwari* cult in Matabeleland, and its exaggerated portrayal of Shona and Ndebele unity and popular resistance in the conflicts of 1896/7.

Written after Ranger was deported from Southern Rhodesia in 1963 for his part in the nationalist movement, the text has faced continuing criticism. First seriously undermined by the historical analysis of Beach and Cobbings in the late 1970's⁷, opinion on *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* widely conforms to Robins's characterisation of it as a nationalist 'praise text', and Ranger as one of the 'willing scribes of a celebratory African nationalist history that profoundly shaped official accounts of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle' (Robins, 1996: 76). The influence of this work in fixing a resonant national narrative linking the struggle for independence with earlier resistance cannot be underestimated. Ranger has detailed interesting examples where he suspects nationalist leaders used the names and histories displayed in his work to mobilise support for the nationalist struggle. A 1975 speech made by then ZANU leader Sithole is an example:

'I greet you in the name of our brave and gallant heroes of the *Chimurenga* of 1896-7 who fell in the great cause of liberating this, our wonderful country, from foreign rule. ...In the names of Mkwati, Nehanda, Kagubi, Mashagombe, Makoni, Kunwi-Nyandoro and others in Mashonaland, and I greet you in the names of Somabulana, Mlugulu, Dhliso, Siginyamatshe, Mpotswana, and others in Matabeleland who master-minded and prosecuted the first *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe... The fighters of the second *Chimurenga*

⁷ See Raftopoulos, 1999.

of Zimbabwe now also have guns – the thing that makes all men the same size – and we are confident that those who defeated us in the first *Chimurenga* will be defeated without fail.' (Ndlovu-Gtsheni, 2008: 54)

Ranger's work was part of a newly emerging character of the Zimbabwean national discourse whereby in the rural areas the spiritual authority of certain ancestors had become central tenets in the articulation and legitimisation of the struggle for independence. Fontein observes, 'As political mythology/theology with which to imagine a nation, and, importantly, to provide historical/ancestral precedence for the use of violence as a means with which to fight for and ultimately establish an independent Zimbabwe, the rebellions of the 1890's, the first *Chimurenga*, became as important for Zimbabwean nationalism as Great Zimbabwe was in terms of providing a deep historical example of past African achievement and future aspiration' (Fontein, 2006: 143). Nationalist leaders began to refer to the independence struggle as the second *Chimurenga*, and acted out this historical connection to the past. In 1962 after arriving back from a trip abroad Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU, was met at the airport by a ninety year old veteran of the 1867 uprisings who ceremoniously handed over to him a war-axe, sword and knobkerrie, and asked of Nkomo to 'Take this sword and these other weapons of war, and with them fight the enemy to the bitter end' (Ranger, 1967: 385; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 57).

Fontein points to an important passage in *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* where Ranger quotes the writings of nationalist politician Nathan Shamuyarira:

'Mr Shamuyarira goes on to describe how the National Democratic Party... 'added one important factor that had been singularly missing in Rhodesian nationalism: emotion'. He described their mass meetings, the prayers to Chaminuka, 'thudding drums, ululation by women dressed in national costumes, and ancestral prayers'. 'In rural areas meetings became political gatherings and more – social occasions where old friendships were renewed and new ones made, past heritage was revived through prayers and traditional singing with African instruments, ancestral spirits invoked to guide and lead the new nation... Christianity and civilisation took a back seat, and new forms of worship, new attitudes were thrust forward dramatically... the spirit pervading the meetings was African, and the desire was to put the twentieth century in an African context'. These meetings he tells us, had an emotional impact 'that went far beyond claiming to rule the country – it was an ordinary man's participation in creating something new, a new nation' (N. Shamuyarira, 1965: 28-31 quoted in Ranger, 1967: 384-5)

Shamuyarira's descriptions of NDP rural meetings display how the invocation of the sacred ancestors was an important aspect of the national discourse. What is also evident is the performance of a cultural nationalism that finds its origins in a distinctly African past. The discursive entity of the 'Zimbabwean people' is decorated and deepened by a ritualistic performance of authenticity. Telling in the above quote

is Shamuyarira's seemingly contradictory description of the 'new attitudes' of a 'new nation' in the context of the revival of 'past heritage', 'traditional singing' and 'ancestral spirits'. His 'emotion' in this case seems to be the valence of Africanist authenticity, whereby the newly imagined nation is realised as novel and old at the same time, a modern formulation of ancient indigenous culture and purpose. This authenticity is performed in the sense that it was to some extent adopted by nationalist elites as part of a wider image of 'authenticity'. We must remember that the ceremonies in which Shamuyarira took part may have had distinctly local characteristics, but in a national discourse that conceives of a 'united African' national subject these particularities become themselves 'African' rather than of a distinctive place, ethnicity or culture.

The performance of authenticity began to take hold amongst nationalists in the 1960's, as leaders like Nkomo and Leopold Takawira sported traditional animal skins and fur hats, and the NDP explicitly began to encourage its followers to use African instruments in party songs, wear traditional cloths and shoes, and to drink water from Zimbabwean water pots instead of cups and jars⁸ (Msindo, 2007: 269; Bhebe, 1989: 101). The national discourse thus conceived of a collectivity presumed to be united through authenticity as Africans, connected through a lineage of indigenous struggle against political and cultural exploitation, and legitimated by sacred authority. Needless to say, this quality of the national discourse has profound implications for how identities are imagined in Zimbabwe and how historical validity confers national heroic status on the bearers of nationalism itself.

Guerrillas as *Vana Vevhu*

Rural mobilisation during the armed struggle phase of the fight for independence in Zimbabwe is an area that has had significant attention paid to it amongst academics. Terence Ranger has alerted us to how studies have demonstrated that rural nationalism was often partly autonomous of the larger movement. A significant part of this is down to its periodisation; after the ban on the nationalist parties in 1964 urban nationalist activity pretty much stopped but in the rural areas the ban was less easy to enforce. After guerrillas began infiltrating Rhodesia from neighbouring countries they did so almost entirely in rural areas (Ranger, 2003: 7). In doing so they interacted with local rural communities in varying ways, producing different patterns of mobilisation, conflict and resistance.

This latter observation is most obvious in the lively debate and conflicting interpretations over rural mobilisation and ideological support for the nationalist movement during the liberation war. David Lan, in his work *Guns and Rain*, sought to demonstrate how the close associations between *mhondoro* spirit mediums and guerrillas saw the guerrillas incorporated into existing spiritual narratives over land and

⁸ It is interesting to note that a young Robert Mugabe, who joined the NDP in 1960, is often attributed a prominent role in the Africanisation of the party. See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 165; Bhebe, 1989: 101.

conflict. As the modern manifestations of the *mhondoro* spirits, guerrillas found legitimacy for their violent struggle - focussed strongly on the symbolic importance of rights to land (Lan, 1985). In Ranger's *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* rural experiences of colonial conquest, land alienation and authoritarian state practices provided the grounds for nationalist mobilisation (Ranger, 1985). Central to this was a revival of support for spirit mediums, who Ranger argued were symbols of 'the fundamental right of the peasantry to the land', and their collaboration with guerrillas (Alexander, 1996: 176). These works have come under heavy criticism from scholars, most notably Norma Kriger in her work *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*. She emphasises the importance in recognising varying agendas and internal struggles in the peasantry, and, most provocatively, how guerrillas often used coercion as a means of mobilisation (Kriger, 1992). Maxwell (1999) and Daneel (1995) have sought to emphasise local agendas, the varying status and approaches of different guerrillas, and how the church also played an important role in galvanising local support for the nationalist struggle⁹.

What these studies demonstrate is the sheer diversity, both regionally and amongst contingent factors, in the interactions between the peasantry, guerrillas, local institutions, narratives and ideologies. I want to focus on how the national discourse outlined above, whereby 'national' sacred figures like Nehanda and Chaminuka were seen as the spiritual antecedent of the second *Chimurenga*, was played out, interacted and furthered at a local level. In doing so it is possible to understand how 'authentic' imaginings of past and present national heroes had important implications for the identity and political status of the nationalist elites and guerrillas both pre- and post-independence.

In their training camps the guerrillas received not only military and political education, but were also told of the nationalist mythology linking their struggle to those of their ancestors. An interview between Joost Fontein and a former guerrilla describes this process, noting the famous prophecy attributed to Ambuya Nehanda before she was hanged in 1897:

'When we were in the camps in Mozambique we were given political education... we were told about how Sekuru Kaguvi, and Ambuya Nehanda led the struggle to fight against those new colonisers, and the heroics they performed... You know it actually inspired us, because they were very brave, and for the simple reason that they were fighting for their country. So there was a phrase that she [Ambuya Nehanda] said, when she was being hanged. 'Our bones will rise, you can kill me now, but our bones will rise against you'. As I speak that phrase it sort of gives you an inexplicable feeling of wanting to take it from there and go forward, you see? So the inspiration was that, 'My bones will rise', and we were told that we were the bones, the very bones that Ambuya was saying' (VaKanda, 2001, quoted in Fontein, 2006: 144)

⁹ For more detailed reviews of this body of literature see Alexander (1996) and Maxwell (1999)

Here we see how the national discourse not only draws a linear history between the 'country' of Nehanda and Kaguvi – although records suggest that no such 'country' existed at that point – and the struggle for Zimbabwe, but also confers a spiritual sanctity upon those taking part in the liberation war; it constructs an identity with preordained status and legitimacy, based upon an imagined tradition of national self-determination and struggle¹⁰. Central to this identity is the winning, both symbolic and political, of the land, the historical terrain of struggle on which the battle for Zimbabwe has taken place.

Lan (1985), Ranger (1985) and Fontein (2006) have demonstrated how this mythology, strongly advocated by political elites, was furthered by guerrillas in rural areas during the struggle. As well as paying homage to their 'national' ancestral figures like Nehanda, guerrillas worked closely with local spirit mediums, and in doing so were incorporated into distinctively local narratives of traditional ancestry, and were granted access to sacred places usually only accessible by the elders and mediums of that specific area (Lan, 1985; Daneel, 1995). Fontein has shown how through the connections drawn by guerrillas and the people they worked amongst Great Zimbabwe became conceived of as not only an example of past African achievement and historical legitimacy as outlined by the nationalist parties, but also as a sacred site of national importance. The degree of variation among accounts, whereby Great Zimbabwe can be seen as a place where nationalist leaders consult ancestors, or as a place where spirit mediums from around the country would gather to strategise, is testament to the fact that this dimension of the site's importance to nationalism emerged from varied local discourses. As Fontein notes, 'in this process, these 'original' and 'authentic' imaginings were taken a great deal further by guerrillas and the 'traditionalists' they co-opted than most of the 'western-educated' and thoroughly 'modern' nationalist elite themselves would have gone' (Fontein, 2006: 147).

A common refrain among nationalists during the war was that the *povo*, the masses, would have to be 'conscientised', both in order to understand the political ideologies underpinning the nationalists plans for the country, and to build the 'unity' necessary to realise Zimbabwe's destiny as an independent and prosperous nation. As Mugabe reflected in 1982. 'The history of the national struggle for liberation as waged by my party, ZANU, has been the history of the mobilisation, conscientisation and direction of the broad oppressed masses as a national collectivity' (Mugabe, 1982: 1). But in the case of rural mobilisation we see how guerrillas had to negotiate already existing social and historical categories, and in doing so ensured that to some extent the dominant national discourse became hybridised when inculcating itself within local discourses of power and tradition. This is an important dimension to consider, that in terms of shaping the interpretation of symbols, institutions, and identities the dominant national discourse most

¹⁰ Of course here the imagination is most powerfully applied to the idea of 'national' struggle. There is no denying that such a tradition of African resistance exists, but what is important here is how it is interpreted and presented.

often propagated by elites will of necessity interact with contesting discourses over the constitution of their representation¹¹.

As a dominant national discourse of historical and sacred legitimacy resonated and deepened in rural Zimbabwe during the war, so the identity of *vana vevhu*, meaning 'son of the soil', calcified as an identity within this narrative. Most commonly used to describe those who took part in the nationalist movement, and the guerrillas who fought in the war, it is, as Bhebe observed, a 'powerful emotive term' and a central part of the 'liberation culture and language' (Bhebe, 1989: 101). It is a national signifier that connotes an identity whose foundations are the imagined histories of the first and second *Chimurenga*, the spiritual legitimacy of those who fought in them, and the sanctity of the terrain they fought for. If 'the people' are a united and authentic African collectivity, their 'destiny' is to be realised through the *vana vevhu*, the historical liberators of the nation. At independence a specially printed banner was hung across the nation, and on it a picture of the Nehanda medium hovered above that of Mugabe, himself depicted upon the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. The image was common on clothes, posters, and pamphlets (Lan, 1985: 218), and is a fitting manifestation of the centrality of this potent symbolism to the imagination of the Zimbabwean nation.

The Heroes after Independence

In 1980, following the Lancaster House negotiations and the resulting national constitution, elections were held in Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF recorded a triumphant victory. The future of the guerrillas from the Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), and the Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), formed an important part of the negotiations, and a strategy was developed for the demobilisation of the guerrilla armies, the incorporation of combatants into a new national army, and a more general reintegration of combatants into Zimbabwean society. Norma Kriger's extensive study of this phase, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe*, reveals how the identity of 'liberation hero' and the invocation of 'war credentials' were a constant symbolic means of legitimating claims to authority and resources. Throughout this period guerrilla appeals to government for rations, improved conditions, political support and jobs was centred on their identity as *vana vevhu*¹². As she notes, 'At the

¹¹ This process is complex, and local imaginings of place and history are themselves open to hybridisation or are simply absent from official narratives. For a discussion of how in post-independence Zimbabwe local histories and sacred imaginings of the Great Zimbabwe ruins were marginalised by the 'professionalised' and 'objectifying' heritage management of the site by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) see Fontein (2006, 2009)

¹² This period was also marred with conflict between the two parties, and the very visible marginalisation of ZIPRA guerrillas is well documented. See Kriger, 2003, Alexander et al (2000) for more details. See below for a discussion of this element of the post-independence period and the Gukurahundi in Matabeleland.

end of the assembly phase, the demobilised guerrillas were established as a privileged group, largely stripped of their armed power but with a potent resource in their symbolic status as liberators and fighters' (Kriger, 2003: 67).

Kriger notes that many guerrillas continued to use their noms de guerre after the demobilisation process, both in the army and workplaces (Kriger, 2003: 163). Pfukwa underlines the importance of this process by characterising Zimbabwean war names beyond the limited idea of a referential signifier, and as 'a social statement reflecting the bearer, the namer and the social environment within which the name is found' (Pfukwa, 2003: 16). In this sense the war name was a means of affirming a specific identity, a renaming within the context of the second *Chimurenga* and the sacred quest for national liberation. War names often concealed regional or ethnic affiliation, renounced colonial categories and sought to develop new social and ideological orientation. 'The process of renaming opened up new possibilities, attributes and values, in addition to reshaping ideologies and creating new concepts of the self as well as redefining the groups within which the self operated' (Pfukwa, 2007: 241). Names like Mbumburu (Bullets), Rwirai Nyika (Fight for the nation) and Chimedza Mabhunú (He who swallows white men), were a way of imagining 'the identity of the fighter as part of a wider social discourse that questioned the status quo and explored new political, social and cultural identities' (Pfukwa, 2007: 245). The retention of war names in post-independence Zimbabwe was part of a process in which the identity of 'national hero' was maintained, valorised and politically and materially recognised.

When institutionally articulated, this identity became a legally protected status that endowed rights to resources, in the forms of demobilisation allowance, secure employment in the army, or employment opportunities and war pensions. As a legal and cultural identity it thus became an attractive prospect, and contestation for the right to be recognised as a 'hero' became prevalent. Kriger documents numerous accounts of fraudulent activities in the demobilisation period, as people posed as guerrillas to gain access to state-sponsored resources, or to acquire authority within workplaces and various bureaucratic divisions (Kriger, 2003: 88-91, 98, 118, 127).

This drew forward a question that still resonates in Zimbabwe today: Who is a war hero? It was at this early point that government support and reward for ex-combatants over other war participants – detainees, political prisoners, members of rural communities who had provided support to the armies, teachers in training camps, to name just some – became visible, as privileges were almost entirely reserved for active combatants. These groups began to protest and affirm the value of their participation in the struggle, and so contestation over identification became an important part of how the second *Chimurenga* was remembered and politically recognised in independent Zimbabwe¹³. The legal recognition of participation in the war was established as a means by which official national histories could be widened

¹³ See Chapter 3 for information on how claims to heroic status continue in Zimbabwe.

to include new claimants, and so a means by which individuals could gain access to a powerful social category. The title of 'national hero' and the claim to liberation credentials, and so to enshrined national status, became an ongoing arena of contest over national recognition and resources, and a register of political legitimacy.

The Commemorated Nation

Soon after independence the government oversaw a policy of national reinscription of public space. The erasure of colonial symbols and monuments was widespread; roads and places were renamed, and many statues of colonial figures, such as that of Cecil Rhodes in Harare, were removed. In line with the reconciliation policy of the time (see the next chapter), only those symbols deemed politically controversial were removed. However Nathan Shamuyarira, then head of the National Monument Committee overseeing the project, revealed an interesting conceptualisation of the term 'reconciliation':

'The occasion of removing statues and monuments and erecting new ones is not one of recrimination, but rather a time of reconciliation – reconciling us to the reality of our independence, the death of colonialism and the national aspirations of the people. It is an occasion for the proper marriage of our past history and our dedication to the new social order' (Shamuyarira, quoted in Kriger, 1995: 141)¹⁴

In this sense the policy of national inscription, the reclaiming of public space to reflect the newly determined nation, is a means of reconciling people with a new national history. It is the imagining of an appropriate, or 'proper' in Shamuriya's terms, presentation of histories that reflect the new 'social order'. In other words, an official national history of Zimbabwe is performed and reified through the creation of sites of memorial and commemoration, and this is seen as representative of the newly realised nation.

Important in this process were the creation of two forms of national commemoration; the proclamation of two public holidays on August the 11th and 12th, called Heroes Days, and the construction of a Heroes Acre just outside Harare. The Heroes Acre contains walls painted with murals depicting the liberation struggle, a statue depicting three heroic guerrillas, a tower upon which sits the Eternal Flame of liberation, and a tomb of the Unknown Soldier. National iconography, from flags to images of the emblematic Zimbabwe Bird figure from Great Zimbabwe, is vividly present across the site¹⁵. The Heroes Acre official brochure explicitly links the site to the idea of a national collectivity based on the struggle against colonialism. Heroes Acre is:

¹⁴ This meaning of 'reconciliation' as acquiescence to a new political order is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

¹⁵ These observations are borrowed from Richard Werbner's article on Heroes Acre and memory in postcolonial Zimbabwe. See Werbner (1998).

‘an expression as well as a symbol of the indefatigable collective will of Zimbabweans to be the makers of their own history, and to be their own liberators by participating in the protracted, arduous and bitter struggle for self-determination... [it] arouses national consciousness, forges national unity and identity...[it] is a symbol of the masses struggle for freedom that transcends tribalism, ethnicism, regionalism and racism’ (Ministry of Information, 1996: 2)

Despite this endeavour Heroes Acre reflects the struggle over the identity of ‘national hero’ by drawing interesting demarcations between those deserving of certain levels of sacralisation in the name of national history. The brochure states that those eligible for burial at the site will have:

‘laid down their lives for Zimbabwe to be born and for the masses to be liberated. They subordinated their individual interests to the collective interests of Zimbabwe as a whole... Theirs was an unwavering support for the cause of freedom and justice for which they accepted and endured suffering and brutality with fortitude’ (Ministry of Information, 1996: 5)

However this became an act of self-memorialisation for the governing elite, as only members of the inner-circle of those nationalist figures who formed the first government of Zimbabwe were buried at the site (Kriger, 1995; Werbner, 1998). Their families receive state pensions and grants, and the heroes’ funerals are entirely state sponsored. Former guerrillas and lesser party members are restricted to Provincial or Local hero status, and in many cases are expected to finance the funerals themselves. Heroes Acre thus reflects a grading system of heroes, a ranked set of distinctions in which nationhood, or national value, is distributed unequally. The political elite in control of the memorialisation process is, as Werbner puts it, ‘sacralising an imprint of itself on the Zimbabwean landscape’ (Werbner, 1998: 78). It is worth quoting Werbner’s analysis here at length:

‘... one tension is represented at Heroes Acre by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the named, individualised tombstones of the distinguished heroes. The anonymous and empty Tomb is for all, and without distinction. Here nationality and citizenship are for all the people, and equality of sociality endures. Against that is the differentiated representation of the heroic dead in the individual tombstones. What is memorialised is the distinction of the select few, a national elite. It is the unmistakable representation of a nation of – in Zimbabwean usage – the *chef* over the *povo* or masses, a nation of graded levels, subordinating the local to the national’

It is important to remember that the national discourse has at its centre the identity of the ‘hero’, the sacred bearer of an ancient national destiny and symbol of the fight for the homeland. With this comes a historic legitimacy to lead the nation forwards. The image depicted on the independence banner of

Nehanda looking down upon his chosen successor, Mugabe, is resonant here. The elites' status as legitimate leaders of the nation, and the vehicle through which the masses can realise their sacred destiny, is temporally and spatially fixed through a state imposed system of commemoration and tribute in which some heroes are more legitimate than others.

The state memorialisation process has also been subject to contestation. ZAPU, who in the early and late 1980's was politically marginalised and its main area of support, Matabeleland, the subject of state imposed terror, consistently challenged the grading of heroes¹⁶. Most notably the renowned ZIPRA commander Lookout Masuku was not granted a state funeral at Heroes Acre, and this event along with other controversies over the bestowal of heroic status became a frame of reference by which ZAPU and other groups could contest the political authority of the ZANU elite, and so the party's historically granted legitimacy. By asking the question 'Who is a hero?' they are challenging the moral and political legitimacy of official national history and the practices of national elites.

Conclusion

What is interesting about the above observations is how the national discourse evolved in Zimbabwe on a set of contradictions that complicate any answer to the question: who belongs to the nation, and what part do they play within it? In one sense the nationalist parties imagined a nation in the form of their own political goals; majority rule, democracy, one-man one-vote, and a united citizenry. In this formulation the nation is not delimited, margins of nationhood are drawn widely. Rights are bestowed equally and legally.

However, this vision of nationhood *as* citizenry is tempered by the discursive boundaries of an imagined Zimbabwe that is constructed as primordial through its temporal link to ancient civilisation. Here the discursive entity of the 'the people' is given an elemental character, an essentialised 'tradition' and cultural 'Africaness'. It is presented as a modern manifestation of something prior to colonialism and Rhodesian rule, a united collective of the indigenous. Immediately we face a different idea of what constitutes the national subject, a different framework by which we can judge political practice, the granting of rights, and the allocation of resources. The discursive construction of an ancient and sacred nation, and a citizenry and political order defined by democratic values, is potentially fraught with contradiction and fragility. It offers different ways of thinking about what constitutes the national collective, and in doing so how members of this collective are identified in political practice. As we shall see this contradiction has been played out in the ways rights, citizenship and justice have been conceived of in Zimbabwe.

¹⁶ For more information on these events see Kriger, 1995.

A mythological national history has also constructed an identity of 'national hero' as central to the imagining of the nation. This has taken two overlapping forms. Firstly, the guerrillas are recognised within the national discourse as the spiritually ordained liberators of the nation, the *vana vevhu*. With this identity comes cultural and political status and moral authority. Secondly, through a process of official memorialisation and historical commemoration the political elite who gained control of the state have created a distinction between themselves and other national heroes. By placing themselves at the head of a hierarchy of national historical authority they have endowed political legitimacy on themselves as the valid leaders of the nation. This valorisation of heroic nationhood has created a site of contest whereby the legitimacy of political authority can be challenged by questioning who deserves the identity of the 'hero', and by contesting official national histories through recourse to unrecognised struggle credentials.

THREE

Unity and Development

In this chapter I want to examine the question of ‘national unity’ within the national discourse. How it was conceived of, and practised, by the nationalist parties in power, was an important question in Zimbabwe in the 1980’s and 1990’s. What is considered here is how a different meaning of ‘national unity’ became a central political principle once ZANU-PF came to power, one that moved beyond ‘national unity’ as a people united as being Zimbabwean, and instead came to mean political unity as the recognition of ZANU-PF as rightful and legitimate representatives of the nation, its people and their interests.

The second part of the chapter will focus on how the political and socioeconomic teleology of the nationalist movement – its policy agenda concerning economic development – created different discursive representations and practices of some of the central identities and symbols at the heart of the national discourse. The pursuit of economic modernisation and technical development had important implications for the architecture of institutions, rights to land, and the state’s role in controlling and ideologically defining social resistance to government policy.

‘National Unity’ as a political principle

As described in the previous chapter, national unity amongst the nationalist parties was not taken for granted. It was stressed as one of their fundamental aims. The idea of building ‘national consciousness’ was how ‘the people’ could be realised, and in itself became the justification for the legitimacy of the nationalist parties’ pursuit of power: for the nationalist party to speak on behalf of ‘everyone’, they must endeavour to realise that ‘everyone’. As the 1980 ZANU-PF constitution states, a central aspect of party policy is to ‘Promote national consciousness and the unity of all of our people in pursuance of aims and objectives’ (ZANU-PF, 1980). However, the historically endowed legitimacy of the ruling elite to lead the nation and pursue its destiny has seen a reinterpretation of the idea of ‘national unity’ beyond the idea of a national collectivity.

The national discourse outlined the status of ‘national hero’, and in doing so placed the nationalist elites at the top of a hierarchy of historical authority. There is a certain logic here: the discourse conceives of a

unified, singular 'African people' through history, and within this narrative a set of leaders endowed with a sacred authority to represent their interests. They are not merely positioned as 'heroes', but as legitimate leaders, those figures who represent the wider interests of 'the people'. If the ruling elite are constructed within the national discourse as the 'rightful' leaders of the nation, then unity becomes not only a case of 'a people united through being Zimbabwean' but also as 'united in the support of the party that speaks on behalf of the Zimbabwean people, that represents them, and legitimately defines their historical destiny'. This interpretation had serious implications for Zimbabwean society, laying down a framework for some degree of racial tolerance through the policy of reconciliation, and, at the same time, violent state-sponsored terror. It was also a crucial rationale of the one-party state agenda pursued by the government¹⁷.

The Conditions of Reconciliation

At the dawn of independence ZANU-PF and the newly formed government began a stated policy of reconciliation, an approach that at one point saw Zimbabwe heralded as 'a model of racial reconciliation in a post-guerrilla war context' (Raftopoulos, 2004: viii). I quote here from Mugabe's much referenced speech on the evening of his party's victory in the 1980 national elections:

'Surely this is now the time to beat our swords into ploughshares so we can attend to the problems of developing our economy and society... I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery' (Mugabe, quoted in de Waal, 1990: 46)

¹⁷ I would argue that it is imperative to trace this meaning of 'national unity' back to the intra-party conflicts of the 1960's and 1970's, what Masipula Sithole called 'the struggles within the struggle', although regrettably the length and scope of this study prevents this taking place here. Some of the factors often cited as explanations of these disputes include disagreements over lobbying for foreign support, the extent to which armed conflict should be pursued, ethnic factors, and the Sino-Soviet divide. For a reading that emphasises personality conflict and ethnicity see Sithole's *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle* (1999) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008). For a study that interprets the major conflicts within the parties as the manifestations of a clear divide between Marxist and bourgeoisie elements of the emerging ruling class in Zimbabwe see Moore (1991). What needs to be considered is how the rival parties 'spoke' for the nation, how their justifications to represent 'the people' were grounded in a renunciation of ethnic identity or particular interests, and how rival parties were represented as somehow outside of the nation, as 'ethnic' or as somehow 'selling out' the nation. In these representations we can begin to discover how the legitimacy of national leadership depended on how the led, 'the people', and their relationship to elites, were constructed. This I believe is an important research agenda for future studies.

Mugabe further elaborated on the underlying logic of this approach:

'Let us constitute a oneness derived from our common objective and total commitment to build a great Zimbabwe that will be the pride of all Africa. Let us deepen our sense of belonging and engender a common interest that knows no race, colour or creed. Let us truly become Zimbabweans with a single loyalty. Long live our freedom!' (Mugabe, quoted in Ministry of Information, 1980)

Here the principle is clear; the 'oneness' of national unity must be derived from a 'total commitment' to building a great Zimbabwe that will alleviate the 'problems of developing our economy and society'. Reconciliation in this sense is the conflation of becoming 'Zimbabwean' with 'a single loyalty' to the aims and objectives of economic and social development. If we consider that the substance and protocols of this socio-economic project are laid down by the newly elected government then implicit in this formulation is the recognition that 'loyalty' is therefore also to those national elites who now hold power. National unity is the 'common interest' as represented by the nationalist elites. Here the distinctions between 'national unity' and 'national loyalty' become ill-defined, a blurring of the social markers of nationhood that has plagued Zimbabwe from the 1980's until today.

It should be noted here that the reconciliation 'policy' was never exactly a government policy at all, in that there was no specific governing legislation, no programmatic plans or applied policies, and no institutions or bodies responsible for overseeing and monitoring. It is widely acknowledged that instead the policy was a calculated set of rhetorical statements, like those above, aimed directly at white members of the population¹⁸.

Various interpretations exist that try to piece together the rationale for the policy of reconciliation. It can be seen as a pragmatic policy of national security used to placate the threat of internal disturbance by former members of the Rhodesian security forces, or the external threat of South African intervention (see de Waal, 1990), or political reassurance that sought to allay fears of retribution amongst the white community (Sachikonye, 2004; Moyo, 1992). At the same time it was a political necessity stemming from the constraints of the Lancaster House constitution, which protected property rights for 10 years, dictated that white-owned land had to be purchased by the government only under a 'willing buyer, willing seller' agreement, and guaranteed a white electoral monopoly of 20 seats in the 100 seat parliament (Raftopoulos, 1994; Alexander, 2006). For Herbst (1990) it constituted a tacit agreement between the ruling elite and whites that, although existing whites could stay and be free from discrimination and high levels of state interference in the private sector, their children would not face the same protection, and indigenisation of the economy and the public sector would intensify within a generation.

¹⁸ It should be noted that there were a series of key political appointments of white figures, including the retention of Ken Flower as head of the security services, and two senior white ministers.

Although economic policy and state practice would have important implications for how whites were identified in Zimbabwe, as I discuss below, what I want to focus on here is how the rhetoric around reconciliation allowed for white entry into the social category of nationhood, and how implicit in this was the conflation of 'national unity' and 'national loyalty'. This entailed an erasure of the historical record, or a rearticulation of that record whereby whites, and white farmers, are no longer remembered as central to the colonial project that the nationalists fought against. They are no longer the enemy from whom the country was liberated. This must entail, as Blair Rutherford has pointed out, a form of anti-memory which cleanses present identities of past wrongs (Rutherford, 2004: 552). The dismantling and erasure of colonial identifications could be seen in the systematic spatial reinscription process, whereby statues and memorials of colonial figures were removed by the government. But 'forgetting' associations with a history of subjugation and exploitation was also a rhetorical device used by ZANU-PF, as exemplified in Mugabe's independence speech:

'If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten' (Mugabe, quoted in Ministry of Information, 1980)

Here the anti-memory over colonial complicity means a unity of 'interest, loyalty, rights and duties', but in practice it meant a retraction of the white community from public politics and contestation. For a large part in the 1980's they concentrated on day-to-day business, and sometimes local government affairs, while relying on public pressure groups, such as the Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries (CZI) and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), to lobby the government behind the scenes (Rutherford, 2004: 553; Moyo, 1992: 22; Herbst, 85, 137)¹⁹.

This tacit understanding that there must be no political activity that would compromise the control of the governing party was disrupted in the 1985 elections, when the emergence of the Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ) under Ian Smith in 1985, widely seen as the reincarnation of the Rhodesian Front, saw the party win 15 of the 20 seats reserved for whites. The reaction by ZANU-PF was that this was against the inherent principles of reconciliation. Emmerson Mnangagwa, then Minister of State for National Security, said:

¹⁹ The power of these groups, far larger than other groups such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), cannot be underestimated, and to a large extent they allowed for the continued prosperity and security of white capital after independence (Moyo, 1992; Raftopoulos, 1994).

‘the vote cast by the majority of the white electorate has shown us that the trust we placed in whites and our belief that they were getting reconciled to the new political order was a trust and belief that was not deserved... [Whites] have spilled the blood of thousands of our people... The vote has proved that they have not repented in any way’ (Mnangagwa, 1985, quoted in Kriger, 2005: 12)

Again in 1990 Nathan Shamuyarira labelled those whites who planned to vote for Edgar Tekere’s Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), then in an alliance with the CAZ, as ‘anti-reconciliation’. Eddison Zvogbo put forward an image of the ZUM as simply the CAZ in disguise:

‘The Rhodesian Front of Ian Smith plunged us into war. When Smith realised he had lost the war he found some blacks to do his work for him. ZANU sought reconciliation after the war, but the RF did not die and so... there’s no such thing as ZUM, only CAZ’ (Zvogbo, quoted in Kriger, 2005: 15)

The fragility of the identity of the ‘reconciled white’ is exemplified by the ease with which past discursive identifications are brought forcefully into political rhetoric. Here the idea of reconciliation as unified loyalty is evident, most explicitly in Mnangagwa’s assertion that reconciliation is about acquiescence to ‘the new political order’, and in the absence of this compliance, the remembering of the death of thousands of Africans at white hands.

***Gukurahundi* and the Dissidents**

From 1983 to late 1986 Matabeleland, and part of the Midlands, was the scene of escalating violence between various government agencies and small numbers of former guerrillas who had fled the demobilisation and integration scheme. In events described by Mugabe as *Gukurahundi* (the rain that washes away the chaff before summer rains) it is estimated that approximately 20,000 people lost their lives, most of them civilian supporters of ZAPU who were suspected of having allegiances to those who became known as the ‘dissidents’ (Phimister, 2008: 197).

These events had their origins in the history of hostility and competition between ZAPU and ZANU, and the regional patterns of recruitment and operation during the liberation war (Alexander et al, 2000: 181). After the elections in 1980 it became even clearer that political support followed the regional and ethnic lines established during the conflict, with ZAPU’s membership and electoral constituency dominated by Ndebele speakers from Matabeleland and ZANU’s broadly Shona speaking. The two parties had a long history of conflict after the party split in 1963, as well as a series of internal struggles and divergences. Armed conflict between ZIPRA and ZANLA was also prolific, in the field and in training camps in neighbouring states, most notably in Tanzania after the formation of the collaborative ZIPA

(Zimbabweans People's Army) when ZANLA guerrillas and the Tanzanian Defence Force disarmed and massacred a large number of ZIPRA fighters (Kriger, 2003: 25; White, 2003).

Many guerrillas from both armies refused to gather in designated Assembly Points (AP) to be integrated into the nascent ZNA (Zimbabwean National Army). Their reasons included fear that the Rhodesian Army would attack them, disagreement with the terms of the settlement, the wish to campaign for their parties, or simply to return home (Alexander et al, 2000). Reports of violence and looting by some guerrillas were widespread, and security forces were deployed to control and capture them. Although initially admonished by both parties, and labelled 'outlaws', 'unruly elements' and 'renegades', after the elections armed men on the loose in Matabeleland came to be known as 'dissidents', and their motives and the threat they presented were increasingly cast in political terms (Alexander et al, 2000: 185).

Guerrillas were moved from rural AP's to urban areas, and clashes flared up between ZIPRA and ZANLA guerrillas. ZANU politicians in the new government increasingly couched their rhetoric in terms of the political threat posed by ZIPRA and ZAPU, with Mugabe noting 'very sinister undertones, a definite organised pattern' to the violence (Alexander et al, 2000: 188). At an election rally in 1980 Enos Nkala, an Ndebele ZANU-PF Minister, declared that 'from today the PF [ZAPU] has declared itself the enemy of ZANU-PF' and encouraged supporters to form 'vigilante committees' to defend themselves against the perceived threat (Kriger, 2003: 77). Political discord between the parties continued and in 1982, after arms caches were allegedly found at the homes of senior ZAPU politicians, Nkomo and other ZAPU ministers were sacked from the government. Senior ZIPRA commanders, including Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa, were arrested on charges of treason, and despite the dismissal of evidence in their court trials they remained in jail until 1986.

As more ZIPRA guerrillas fearing persecution by the government and ZANLA fled into rural Matabeleland, Nkomo and ZAPU were regularly charged with organising their activities as part of a choreographed effort to overthrow the government. This was despite consistent opposition by ZAPU to the desertions and the return to arms of their ZIPRA guerrillas. Tension and paranoia was only increased in 1982 when South Africa began operations aimed at destabilising the country, including the recruitment and arming of a group of Zimbabwean insurgents called Super ZAPU operating in Matabeleland, which only further legitimised ZANU-PF's military response.

The violence in Matabeleland significantly worsened with the deployment of the notorious 5th Brigade, a North Korean trained unit directly answerable to the Prime Minister and explicitly intended for 'internal defence purposes'. Its political rationale was obvious in the purging of all ex-ZIPRA members from its ranks, and the chosen victims of its violent but systematic and organised campaign. In a widespread operation it targeted ZAPU party chairman and civil servants, former ZIPRA combatants and refugees,

and thousands of civilians. The often grotesquely violent and harrowing nature of its activities is borne witness to in the individual testimonies of its victims (see CCJP, 1997). The 5th Brigade operated on a background of political rhetoric that justified the targeting of civilians on the grounds that 'We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who a dissident is', as Mugabe put it. It also equated support for ZAPU with support for dissidents. This was exemplified by Enos Nkala's 1983 threat that if you support ZAPU 'you will die or be sent to prison', a view advocated by several other government ministers (CCJP, 1997: 44).

Despite the obvious ethnic dimension to the conflict, the political justifications were pivoted on a discourse of 'national unity' that polarised the characters of ZAPU and ZANU as self-interested and tribal on one hand, and national and unifying on the other. In April 1983 Minister of State Sydney Sekeramayi told a rally that 'the army will stay a long, long time... the majority of people realise they have been misled by PF-ZAPU... [and] will understand the national character of PF-ZANU' (CCJP, 1997: 54). At an election rally in 1985 Mugabe said that 'people in Matabeleland are being tortured, robbed and murdered because of the selfish political interests of Dr Joshua Nkomo... I am asking you to vote for ZANU-PF because we want to be one people' (Phimister, 2008: 209).

Again in 1985 Mugabe went on to underline that the problems in Matabeleland were that the presence of ZAPU and the dissidents were themselves emblematic of national disunity, and stood in the way of people understanding that they were a coalescent aspect of an inevitable national collective:

'It is really a pity that we are talking in terms of Matabeleland and the rest of the country... Really the problem is Nkomo and ZAPU as I see it. Nkomo and ZAPU and the dissidents. Nkomo cannot accept a secondary role in our political order and so he must organise the people tribally, and if they cannot be organised tribally, he must set the dissidents on them so that they will do his will. We have been discussing this issue with the people of Matabeleland at various levels and there is no doubt in our mind that it's more the fact of the fear of the dissidents... They [the people of Matabeleland] are not a strange people, they are not a foreign element – they are part and parcel of our population and we have interacted with them at various levels... and we are satisfied that without ZAPU, without the dissident element, they will fall in line... we do not distinguish them from people elsewhere. Their fate is intertwined with the fate of others. Their destiny is the same as the destiny of other people and we never talk in terms of Ndebeles, Shonas, Vendas, Tongas – we never do that... In fact we discourage that in our own political philosophy. The people in ZANU did not vote for me because they were against the Ndebeles... Everywhere we went we told the people they were one, and so it is the oneness of the people we are more interested in' (Mugabe, 1985, quoted in Phimister, 2008: 209-210)

We are reminded once again that through the national elites imagining of 'the people' they are discursively defined and delimited as a collectivity; as tribe-less and monolithic in their 'oneness'. For ZANU-PF to speak for all of Zimbabwe it must realise this 'oneness' by constantly asserting it; they 'told the people they were one', and that ZANU-PF had 'a national character', and they must erase any imagining that subverts this unity, in this case the ruthless political ambition of Nkomo and his tendency to 'tribalise' the people of Matabeleland. To 'speak' in terms of sub-national identities is proscribed, only the national will be spoken²⁰.

It is in these terms that the national discourse 'speaks' the people of Matabeleland into nationhood, through a representation of them as tribeless, homogenously Zimbabwean and so politically represented by ZANU-PF. The praxis of this articulation of nationhood is coercion and suppression, but it finds legitimacy in the inevitable, the idea of a common 'destiny' and 'fate'. Mugabe is telling supporters of ZAPU that they are part of this destiny, this is his knowledge which he must share with them. The implication is that national destiny is interpreted by ZANU-PF, the only legitimate leaders of the nation²¹. In this case loyalty to ZANU-PF becomes a marker of nationhood, a standard by which citizens can be seen to have realised their 'oneness' and common destiny. The 1980 election poster that states *ZANU-PF VANHU, VANHU IZANU-PF* (ZANU-PF is the people, the people are ZANU-PF) is perhaps telling of the inherent logic of this formulation. For ZAPU and the people of Matabeleland, and the white supporters of CAZ or ZUM, political disloyalty brings forth discursive representations that cast dissenters as exterior to the nation, somehow outside of that defined as inescapable and preordained.

If the national discourse represented events in Matabeleland as a matter of unity and nationhood, this exclusion or silencing of ethnic interpretations was not mirrored amongst communities at the receiving end of its violent practice. In their extensive social history of Matabeleland, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) note local memories of an almost entirely Shona 5th Brigade often making recourse to ethnic justifications for their use of violence. The events were interpreted as ethnic persecution:

'[People] came to see the conflict not as one fought against the dissidents but against the Ndebele and ZAPU. In local accounts there is constant slippage between an emphasis on tribalism and on inter-party

²⁰ This silence in the national discourse over ethnic identity is symptomatic of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya call the 'echoing silence' of ethnicity in Zimbabwe generally. 'Until recently, Zimbabweans have been conspicuously silent about questions of ethnicity. As in the colonial period, especially during the days of the nationalist liberation struggle, all attempts to discuss ethnic identities, especially their manifestation in the political and economic spheres, were brushed aside' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Muzondidya, 2007: 276).

²¹ One is reminded here of the ZANU-PF liberation song 'Zvinoziba neZANU', in which the people ask how they can defeat the Rhodesians and gain their independence, to which the chorus answer is *Zvinozibwa neZANU* (only ZANU has the answer) (Pongweni, 1992: 20).

conflict as the motive force behind the Fifth Brigade's violence... people elided the categories of Ndebele and ZAPU: an attack on the Ndebele was an attack on ZAPU, an attack on ZAPU was an attack on the Ndebele... The Fifth Brigades greatest 'success' may have been in hardening ethnic prejudice and in bolstering a strong identification between ethnicity and political affiliation' (Alexander et al, 2000: 223)

Drawing on interviews with former dissidents Alexander notes that they at once lamented what they saw as the ethnicisation of what had been an inclusive political project, and justified raids into Shona areas on the grounds that the government was persecuting Ndebele people (Alexander, 2004: 170). In their important report into the civil strife of the 1980's The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) also concluded that it 'hardened' ethnic identifications and brought a broad feeling of alienation from the national body politic (CCJP, 1997: 59-60). The irony here is that, to paraphrase Richard Werbner, the insistence on and enforcement of a de-ethnicised national unity 'fed and in turn was fed by its antithesis, the polarisation of... two super-tribes, the Shona against the Ndebele' (Werbner, 1991: 159).

There has been a noticeable increase in Ndebele cultural organisations in the region since the disturbances, and a continuing discourse around ideas of political reform to introduce federal government or even an independent Ndebele state (Raftopoulos, 1994: 19). Ndlovu-Gatsheni has traced the genealogy of what he calls 'Ndebele particularism' in the historical construction of Ndebele ethnicity. He finds that the massacres in Matabeleland have been a more modern occurrence in a sequence of events that have historically galvanised a long-standing trend of Ndebele self-determination. This sequence has continued to manifest itself in radical Ndebele cultural and political organisations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 119-122). We are reminded that the premise of Zimbabwean nationhood, the idea that there exists a definable national community, was not settled by the imaginings of the nationalist elites. Instead the silences of the national discourse, its inability to speak ethnicity as social category within Zimbabwe, and its authoritarian practices, form a kind of exclusion that has the potential to imbricate itself into the series of historical processes that have shaped and produced ethnic identification.

The One-Party State

The Unity Accord of 1987 that saw ZAPU subsumed into ZANU-PF led the new united party to declare once again that it would seek to establish a one-party state in Zimbabwe (Unity Accord, 1987). In 1990 the restrictions of the Lancaster House Constitutional Agreement, which guaranteed the rights of people to form and join political parties, would no longer be in place and ZANU-PF could begin to work towards the completion of an agenda that it had begun to set in the early 1980's (Moyo, 1991: 83). With ZAPU now no longer legally active the electoral threat of Matabeleland, which they had won comfortably in 1980 and 1985, would also be extinguished.

As the likelihood of a one-party state increased so the debates around its suitability to Zimbabwe began to flourish amongst party members and Zimbabwean intellectuals. Academics began to analyse the historical and ideological foundations of the concept, situating it in a wider African and global tradition with a variety of antecedents and explanatory factors. Many observers sought a materialist critique in which a petit-bourgeoisie scramble to keep other factions from the political power that allows for personal accumulation (Zimunya, 1991; Musarurwa, 1991; Mutambara, 1991). Others interrogated the justifications that presented one-party rule as the modern manifestation of ancient and authentic forms of African social organisation (Sithole, 1989; Mandaza, 1991; Nabudere, 1989). Drawing from Nyerere's Ujamaa, this discourse seeks to find pre-colonial precedents for the one-party state in traditional social organisation, and saw ZANU-PF cite the idea that in an African community there is 'only one chief' (Nabudere, 1989: 3; Meyns, 1989: 184). These critics broadly found that these ideas of historical lineage were largely inaccurate affectations, pointing out that there were nothing like the very modern forms of party and state found in the African past, and that pre-colonial social structure could often be exploitative and undemocratic.

For Sithole (1991) and Mandaza (1991) the Leninist idea of the one single authentic vanguard party is an important foundation for the one-party state in Socialist African countries and had significant influence in Zimbabwe. Sithole argued that democratic centralism as a form of deliberation and debate is a resonant form of political organisation to nationalist parties whose allegiance was often with the Soviet Union and China, but it could easily be manipulated to serve the interests of those who propose it. Mandaza also asserts that implicit theoretical justification for one-party state rule could be found in the 'modernisation thesis', with its emphasis on unity and strong leadership to counter the inevitable instability and strife that occurred as developing countries moved towards a Western model of development (Mandaza, 1991: 22-23).

These analyses are undoubtedly relevant to the Zimbabwean case, and illustrate the complex origins of the drive for the one-party state in Africa. However, as Meyns and Moyo (1991) point out, the justifications given for the one-party state in Zimbabwe were most commonly embedded in the discourse around 'national unity' and were a continuation of the agenda that sought to remove alternative centres of political support, most obviously ZAPU. At the centre of the debate around the one-party state in Zimbabwe was the 'aim of maintaining and consolidating national unity' (Meyns, 1989: 185), a concept deemed by Moyo to be considered 'sacrosanct' by ZANU-PF (Moyo, 1991: 89).

In 1984 Mugabe stated:

'We must be nationally united and therefore it is necessary that we show this image to our people, the image of being one, and the best way of doing it is to have one political umbrella under which all shades

of opinion can be accommodated... We will not go about a one-party state in an arbitrary manner. We realise that we have various opinions in the country – we have various ethnic groups; we have different races, different religious bodies and men of different religious persuasions – and that therefore from a political view it is necessary that we try to cater for these heterogeneous opinions of our people, but we do that under a homogeneous arrangement that recognises that first and foremost we are one Zimbabwe’ (Mugabe, 1984, quoted in Meyns, 1989: 185)

Here again we see the desire to ‘show’ the people of Zimbabwe their ‘oneness’, to illustrate it in order to realise it. The ‘best way’ of doing so is through a political apparatus that reflects the position of ZANU-PF as the legitimate embodiment of the nation, and as the bearer of its destiny, the ‘umbrella’ under which people gather. At the same time the one-party state produces a system of governance that ensures that any opinion stemming from a sub-national identity or affiliation is subsumed under a ‘homogeneous arrangement’, a way of ensuring that these concerns must be of a national nature. It is an institutional composition under which contestation and deliberation can take place, and interests can be represented, without galvanising other forms of social and political identification, and so without threatening the unity of all Zimbabweans. It also recognises and preserves the only legitimate incarnation of ‘one Zimbabwe’, ZANU-PF.

The 1985 ZANU-PF election manifesto illustrates that within this discourse is a logical causal relationship between an institutional arrangement that preserves national unity and the fulfilment of the task of economic and social development:

‘Unity is our first task towards the attainment of a just society where everyone’s needs will be met. Zimbabwe will only develop when colour, tribe, sex, language and region are no longer of consequence in determining how our wealth is to be distributed... That is why, in line with our Second Congress Resolution, we pledge to work towards the attainment of a One-Party State... That is why ZANU-PF seeks to bring all Zimbabweans under its umbrella so that there is only One Leader – the Party – for One Zimbabwe... we shall establish one party to represent the interests of all working people in Zimbabwe, all those who seek to abolish the exploitation of man by man and bring about justice for all’ (ZANU-PF, 1985: 5)

Here national unity in the form of the one-party state is explicitly regarded as the condition under which the nation can realise its developmental goals. However it was in the discourses around modernisation and development, and the consolidation of state authority, that alternative representations and practices emerged that were often contrary to the symbols and identities of the national discourse.

The Developmental Discourse

TWO

A Nation and its Heroes

The rise of mass nationalism in Zimbabwe had as its background a diverse political culture, with a large variety of associational activity and political formation. Despite this fact the emerging national discourse rested on two dominant conceptions of what constituted 'the people' of Zimbabwe. Firstly they were imagined as a democratic citizenry, reflecting the political goals of the nationalist movement. But, at the same time, a discourse developed around a 'united African' as a national subject. This primordial figure of native authenticity became historically located in an emerging narrative of an 'African' people. Beginning in Great Zimbabwe it progressed into an unbroken thread of African resistance against colonialism, and the struggle against Rhodesian rule became known as the second *Chimurenga*.

This narrative has at its centre the image of the 'national hero', sacredly endowed with historical legitimacy to lead the nation to its destiny of self-determination. This status has been reified through a system of official memorialisation and historical commemoration, and with it a hierarchy of historical authority and political legitimacy has been discursively constructed. The leaders of ZANU-PF have been placed at its summit, but at the same time the status of 'national hero' wields significant political currency to those who seek to challenge this historical legitimacy.

The emerging 'Zimbabwe'

In his work on the formation of a ruling political class in Zimbabwe David Moore points to a quote that illustrates how in the late 1940's and early 1950's a small, mission school educated, African elite began to illustrate the beginnings of a collective identity of Africans living in Southern Rhodesia based upon national political goals. Quoting from an early Goromonzi school magazine we can see the beginnings of a Zimbabwean 'consciousness' based on an idea of a nation-wide polity:

'(if we) desert our people, who will teach and uplift them?... Only if all educated Africans do their bit to improve their small corner and each unites with the others, fighting the same battle, will we attain the expected goal' (Moore, 1991: 481)

The political future of this generation lay in the nationalist parties of the 1950's and 1960's, but the origins of pan-territorial nationalism are widely regarded to be found further back in history, in the different interrelations between various earlier forms of political organisation from the late 19th century onwards.

From the Matabele Homeland Society (MHS) that sought an ancestral homeland within the remit of the colonial state, to the Young Ethiopian Manyika Society that campaigned for the rights of their native *chiManyika* language in the face of colonial language harmonisation policies, to the nascent trade union organisations like the Federation of Bulawayo African Trade Unions (FBATU), a complex network of political formations emerged in colonial Southern Rhodesia that were part of an ongoing process of the intercession and configuration of political identity. Included in this were organisations that had already begun to operate on a nationwide political basis, including the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress (SRBC), a conservative organisation fighting for voting and economic rights for those members of the African community able to compete with Europeans (West, 2002). Enocent Msindo observes that:

'Southern Rhodesians of the early 1950's might not have defined themselves as nationalists, nor had they imagined a named nation and its social boundaries. They were not technically Zimbabweans. They had many identities that at times fed into each other, including those based on ethnicity, region, gender and trade union membership' (Msindo, 2007: 273-4)

Although they had in common a genesis provoked through lived encounters with colonial policy, from forced removals to taxation, these social formations drew on various discourses to articulate political demands. These included the appropriation and channelling of localised religious histories into rural self-help societies, the pan-African radicalism of Marcus Garvey, and liberal democratic discourses derived from international connections to The British Fabian society, the liberal movement in Cape Town and the civil rights movement in the USA⁶.

As the historical literature on pre-1950's Rhodesia demonstrates it is difficult and even unnecessary to attempt to identify a linear trajectory from early associational life to broader based nationalism, and more helpful to conceive of the emergence of a complex and constantly negotiated indigenous political culture which provided the organisational and societal grounds for the rise of nationalism. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

⁶ There is an extensive historical and historiographical literature on political formations in pre and post-war Rhodesia. For an analysis of the impact of Garveyism in Zimbabwe see West, 2002b. For a comprehensive history of the rise of a heterogeneous, urban black middle class into nationalist politics see West, 2002a. For a history of early liberalism and democracy in urban Rhodesia see Scarneccia, 2008. For a historical analysis of the formation of political identity and nationalism in rural Matabeleland see Ranger, 1999; Alexander, McGregor, Ranger, 2000. For a history of the labour movement see Phimister, Raftopoulos, 1997. Also see Raftopoulos, 1999 for a historiographical review.

highlights the unevenness of this process, citing numerous examples of members seamlessly moving between different organisations, including ethnic, national and others, and exploring how these formations appropriated and adopted different discourses in an ongoing arbitration of a pluralistic political terrain (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 45-50).

By the 1950's the educated elites described by Moore had become the dominant interlocutors of nationalism through the founding of the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC) in 1957, a reconstituted SRBC, and, following its banning, the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1960 (West, 2002: 207-218; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 51). The nationalist parties became a political home for an emerging African elite and often a site of discursive absorption of the array of grievances expressed by the organisations mentioned above, or simply subordinated smaller organisations and interest groups (Raftopoulos, 1999: 125-126).

It is important to note here the obvious heterogeneous origins of nationalist political formation, and the implication that any coherent articulation of nation-ness by it would have to necessarily represent a diverse community of identities, whether ethnic or political. Despite this Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes how the SADC, the NDP and later the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1961, as well as the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) after ZAPU's split in 1963, all affirmed a presumed notion of united citizenship under democratic rule. From the liberal democratic idea of citizenship under the SRANC, to the one-man-one-vote solution to colonialism espoused by ZAPU and ZANU, the nationalist parties presented an idea of 'the people', but more often than not did so in the language of democratic rule. For example the 1965 constitution of ZAPU begins with:

A. Aims and objective:

- i. To establish the policy of one-man-one-vote as the basis of government in this country.
- ii. To maintain the spirit of democracy and love of liberty among the people of Zimbabwe.
- iii. To unite the African people so that they liberate themselves from all forms of imperialism and colonialism.
- iv. To fight relentlessly for the elimination of all forms of oppression.
- v. To create conditions for the economic prosperity of the people under a government based on the principle of one-man-one vote.
- vi. To foster the development of the best values in African culture and traditions, so as to establish a desirable order.

(ZAPU, 1968)

ZANU, despite emphasising differences between the two major nationalist parties, presented a similar formulation of 'the people'. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes, 'its approach to the issue of belonging was not

radical... it defined itself just like ZAPU as 'a non-racial union of all the peoples of Zimbabwe who share a common destiny and a common fate believing in the African character of Zimbabwe and democratic rule by the majority regardless of race, colour, creed or tribe' (ZANU, 1963, quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 80). The national parties began to speak of 'a people' as a discursive entity, a fixed unitary populace on whose behalf they spoke, but what is important here is that the contours and character of this entity is defined in two ways. Central to these definitions are the recurring themes of democracy, unity and 'the African people', and there are significant tensions between them.

Firstly Zimbabwe is presented as a political community that must be fought for, under which a democratic dispensation will allow for a minimal delimitation of who 'the people' are. In this case, a non-racial, democratic imagining of Zimbabwean-ness allows for the formulation of a united citizenship, above other forms of identity like ethnicity, associational membership or race. In this case the nation itself is conceived of as a democratic political community; firstly it is a democratic citizenry under one-man one-vote, but at the same time it is a unified collective in that the political premise of democratic, independent rule unites 'the people' above and beyond other identities present within the territorial body which they seek to liberate.

This is the nationalism espoused by Ndabaningi Sithole, the founder and first leader of ZANU, in his 1959 book *African Nationalism*. Aimed mainly at a sceptical Western audience, it sought to portray nationalism as not against whites but against white supremacy in order to seek a society that looks beyond race and tribe and is built on democratic ideals of freedom and equality (Sithole, 1968). The model is, in Chatterjee's sense, largely 'derivative', drawing from the one-man one-vote model of British parliamentary rule. This translates into majority rule, but the meanings of majority rule had connotations of rule by the majority racial group: rule by Africans. Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU, understood this, and asserted that majority rule 'meant' non-racialism and democracy. To be a national subject was largely defined by being a voter in a democratic society:

'There is talk by some people that 'majority rule' means rule by Africans only; that Africanisation will deprive Europeans of their jobs and that there will be a general lowering of standards. To us majority rule means the extension of political rights to all people so that they are able to elect a Government of their own choice, irrespective of race, colour or creed of the individual forming such a government. All that matters is that a Government must consist of the majority party elected by the majority of the country's voters' (Nkomo, 1964, quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008)

However, present in the early mission statements of the nationalist parties is a pervasive image of 'Africans' and 'African people' as a collectivity. In stressing the need for unity amongst Africans, the discourse is at once acknowledging that this collectivity is not absolute, and yet reaffirming its existence as

the premise on which the nationalist parties operate. To put it differently, a united community of 'Africans' is desirable and unity must be encouraged to truly realise this, and we, the nationalists, speak on behalf of that realisation, that future community. In speaking on its behalf they are thus creating the discursive boundaries, symbols and histories which define its emerging form. Although the democratic ideals form part of this, the heavy emphasis on 'African character', 'African people' and 'the best values in African culture and traditions' being used 'to establish a desirable order', begin to reveal a deepening of this idea of collectivity beyond notions of a united democratic community. At the same they reveal inconsistencies and tensions over what is meant by 'the people'; are they a united citizenry under a democratic dispensation, or does 'majority rule' under this system in fact connote a different conception of 'the people', a united community of 'Africans' that creates a new 'order'? If so what constitutes this 'people', and their 'African character'?

A central symbol for this presentation of 'African' collective unity was the naming of the country Zimbabwe, explicitly endorsed in the titles of the leading nationalist parties. Michael Mawema is generally recognised as using the term Zimbabwe as a signifier of the nation for the first time when addressing a rally of supporters sometime in the early 1960's, when he was president of the NDP (Fontein, 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The archaeological site carries great historical valence as the embodiment of past African achievement, and is generally interpreted as 'national' heritage. As Robert Mugabe noted when opening an extension to the Great Zimbabwe Site Museum in 1988:

'Great Zimbabwe is an important symbol for it shows this generation what we as a people were capable of achieving. It encourages us to reach for greater heights in our fight to rebuild Zimbabwe' (quoted in Fontein, 2006: 119)

At the point of its adoption it also carried great significance as a site of contestation over national belonging. In his extensive anthropological study of Great Zimbabwe Fontein notes that various nationalists and academics point to the fact that the adoption of Zimbabwe as the name of the country in waiting was a reaction against Rhodesian appropriation of its history. From the late 19th century onwards various archaeologists and historians had put forward foreign origin myths for Great Zimbabwe. These theories, and the challenges they received from other academics, are collectively known as the 'Zimbabwe controversy' (Fontein, 2006: 3-13). Karlshom (1989) and Chennels (1996) works on Rhodesian settler discourses point out the narrative strategy of Rhodesian nationalism which defined Rhodesian identity as a reaction to constructed ideas of black inferiority and primitiveness (part of the environment rather than a social entity). The institutionalisation of foreign origin stories of Great Zimbabwe as official history by the colonial state points to the symbolic myth of Great Zimbabwe as an early white civilisation as a key element of this discourse. Karlshomm thus argues that according to this narrative the Rhodesians were not invading Zimbabwean land but instead reclaiming lost space, and thus the idea that an ancient white

civilisation was defeated by hordes of black savages became an allegory for the settler community itself (Karlshomm, 1989). As Great Zimbabwe became an important symbol for the nationalist movement, the 'Zimbabwe controversy' returned in a new wave of Rhodesian revisionist literature in the 1960's and 1970's that attempted to reassert the sites foreign origins (Fontein, 2006: 122-123).

The naming of Zimbabwe was then also seen as a reclamation of the origins of the nation, and allegorical of the independence struggle itself. In this sense the ruins became a meaningful trope by which the collective 'people' could be imagined as a historically valid entity.

The second *Chimurenga*

During the period of Great Zimbabwe's elevation to national symbolism within the liberation movement historians began to utilise oral histories in order to understand the African past, and many of these became central texts of the national discourse. By highlighting the past rebellions of ancestral figures like Chaminuka, Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi against colonial rule, they traced a linear genealogy of African rebellion. Terence Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (1967) was particularly influential in its focus on the roles played by Nehanda and Kaguvi in Mashonaland, and the *Mwari* cult in Matabeleland, and its exaggerated portrayal of Shona and Ndebele unity and popular resistance in the conflicts of 1896/7.

Written after Ranger was deported from Southern Rhodesia in 1963 for his part in the nationalist movement, the text has faced continuing criticism. First seriously undermined by the historical analysis of Beach and Cobbing in the late 1970's⁷, opinion on *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* widely conforms to Robins's characterisation of it as a nationalist 'praise text', and Ranger as one of the 'willing scribes of a celebratory African nationalist history that profoundly shaped official accounts of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle' (Robins, 1996: 76). The influence of this work in fixing a resonant national narrative linking the struggle for independence with earlier resistance cannot be underestimated. Ranger has detailed interesting examples where he suspects nationalist leaders used the names and histories displayed in his work to mobilise support for the nationalist struggle. A 1975 speech made by then ZANU leader Sithole is an example:

I greet you in the name of our brave and gallant heroes of the *Chimurenga* of 1896-7 who fell in the great cause of liberating this, our wonderful country, from foreign rule. ..In the names of Mkwati, Nehanda, Kagubi, Mashagombe, Makoni, Kunwi-Nyandoro and others in Mashonaland, and I greet you in the names of Somabulana, Mlugulu, Dhliso, Siginyamatshe, Mpotswana, and others in Matabeleland who master-minded and prosecuted the first *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe... The fighters of the second *Chimurenga*

⁷ See Raftopoulos, 1999.

of Zimbabwe now also have guns – the thing that makes all men the same size – and we are confident that those who defeated us in the first *Chimurenga* will be defeated without fail.’ (Ndlovu-Gtsheni, 2008: 54)

Ranger’s work was part of a newly emerging character of the Zimbabwean national discourse whereby in the rural areas the spiritual authority of certain ancestors had become central tenets in the articulation and legitimisation of the struggle for independence. Fontein observes, ‘As political mythology/theology with which to imagine a nation, and, importantly, to provide historical/ancestral precedence for the use of violence as a means with which to fight for and ultimately establish an independent Zimbabwe, the rebellions of the 1890’s, the first *Chimurenga*, became as important for Zimbabwean nationalism as Great Zimbabwe was in terms of providing a deep historical example of past African achievement and future aspiration’ (Fontein, 2006: 143). Nationalist leaders began to refer to the independence struggle as the second *Chimurenga*, and acted out this historical connection to the past. In 1962 after arriving back from a trip abroad Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU, was met at the airport by a ninety year old veteran of the 1867 uprisings who ceremoniously handed over to him a war-axe, sword and knobkerrie, and asked of Nkomo to ‘Take this sword and these other weapons of war, and with them fight the enemy to the bitter end’ (Ranger, 1967: 385; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 57).

Fontein points to an important passage in *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* where Ranger quotes the writings of nationalist politician Nathan Shamuyarira:

‘Mr Shamuyarira goes on to describe how the National Democratic Party... ‘added one important factor that had been singularly missing in Rhodesian nationalism: emotion’. He described their mass meetings, the prayers to Chaminuka, ‘thudding drums, ululation by women dressed in national costumes, and ancestral prayers’. ‘In rural areas meetings became political gatherings and more – social occasions where old friendships were renewed and new ones made, past heritage was revived through prayers and traditional singing with African instruments, ancestral spirits invoked to guide and lead the new nation... Christianity and civilisation took a back seat, and new forms of worship, new attitudes were thrust forward dramatically... the spirit pervading the meetings was African, and the desire was to put the twentieth century in an African context’. These meetings he tells us, had an emotional impact ‘that went far beyond claiming to rule the country – it was an ordinary man’s participation in creating something new, a new nation’ (N. Shamuyarira, 1965: 28-31 quoted in Ranger, 1967: 384-5)

Shamuyarira’s descriptions of NDP rural meetings display how the invocation of the sacred ancestors was an important aspect of the national discourse. What is also evident is the performance of a cultural nationalism that finds its origins in a distinctly African past. The discursive entity of the ‘Zimbabwean people’ is decorated and deepened by a ritualistic performance of authenticity. Telling in the above quote

is Shamuyarira's seemingly contradictory description of the 'new attitudes' of a 'new nation' in the context of the revival of 'past heritage', 'traditional singing' and 'ancestral spirits'. His 'emotion' in this case seems to be the valence of Africanist authenticity, whereby the newly imagined nation is realised as novel and old at the same time, a modern formulation of ancient indigenous culture and purpose. This authenticity is performed in the sense that it was to some extent adopted by nationalist elites as part of a wider image of 'authenticity'. We must remember that the ceremonies in which Shamuyarira took part may have had distinctly local characteristics, but in a national discourse that conceives of a 'united African' national subject these particularities become themselves 'African' rather than of a distinctive place, ethnicity or culture.

The performance of authenticity began to take hold amongst nationalists in the 1960's, as leaders like Nkomo and Leopold Takawira sported traditional animal skins and fur hats, and the NDP explicitly began to encourage its followers to use African instruments in party songs, wear traditional cloths and shoes, and to drink water from Zimbabwean water pots instead of cups and jars⁸ (Msindo, 2007: 269; Bhebe, 1989: 101). The national discourse thus conceived of a collectivity presumed to be united through authenticity as Africans, connected through a lineage of indigenous struggle against political and cultural exploitation, and legitimated by sacred authority. Needless to say, this quality of the national discourse has profound implications for how identities are imagined in Zimbabwe and how historical validity confers national heroic status on the bearers of nationalism itself.

Guerrillas as *Vana Vevhu*

Rural mobilisation during the armed struggle phase of the fight for independence in Zimbabwe is an area that has had significant attention paid to it amongst academics. Terence Ranger has alerted us to how studies have demonstrated that rural nationalism was often partly autonomous of the larger movement. A significant part of this is down to its periodisation; after the ban on the nationalist parties in 1964 urban nationalist activity pretty much stopped but in the rural areas the ban was less easy to enforce. After guerrillas began infiltrating Rhodesia from neighbouring countries they did so almost entirely in rural areas (Ranger, 2003: 7). In doing so they interacted with local rural communities in varying ways, producing different patterns of mobilisation, conflict and resistance.

This latter observation is most obvious in the lively debate and conflicting interpretations over rural mobilisation and ideological support for the nationalist movement during the liberation war. David Lan, in his work *Guns and Rain*, sought to demonstrate how the close associations between *mhondoro* spirit mediums and guerrillas saw the guerrillas incorporated into existing spiritual narratives over land and

⁸ It is interesting to note that a young Robert Mugabe, who joined the NDP in 1960, is often attributed a prominent role in the Africanisation of the party. See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 165; Bhebe, 1989: 101.

conflict. As the modern manifestations of the *mbondoro* spirits, guerrillas found legitimacy for their violent struggle - focussed strongly on the symbolic importance of rights to land (Lan, 1985). In Ranger's *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* rural experiences of colonial conquest, land alienation and authoritarian state practices provided the grounds for nationalist mobilisation (Ranger, 1985). Central to this was a revival of support for spirit mediums, who Ranger argued were symbols of 'the fundamental right of the peasantry to the land', and their collaboration with guerrillas (Alexander, 1996: 176). These works have come under heavy criticism from scholars, most notably Norma Kriger in her work *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*. She emphasises the importance in recognising varying agendas and internal struggles in the peasantry, and, most provocatively, how guerrillas often used coercion as a means of mobilisation (Kriger, 1992). Maxwell (1999) and Daneel (1995) have sought to emphasise local agendas, the varying status and approaches of different guerrillas, and how the church also played an important role in galvanising local support for the nationalist struggle⁹.

What these studies demonstrate is the sheer diversity, both regionally and amongst contingent factors, in the interactions between the peasantry, guerrillas, local institutions, narratives and ideologies. I want to focus on how the national discourse outlined above, whereby 'national' sacred figures like Nehanda and Chaminuka were seen as the spiritual antecedent of the second *Chimurenga*, was played out, interacted and furthered at a local level. In doing so it is possible to understand how 'authentic' imaginings of past and present national heroes had important implications for the identity and political status of the nationalist elites and guerrillas both pre- and post-independence.

In their training camps the guerrillas received not only military and political education, but were also told of the nationalist mythology linking their struggle to those of their ancestors. An interview between Joost Fontein and a former guerrilla describes this process, noting the famous prophecy attributed to Ambuya Nehanda before she was hanged in 1897:

'When we were in the camps in Mozambique we were given political education... we were told about how Sekuru Kaguvi, and Ambuya Nehanda led the struggle to fight against those new colonisers, and the heroics they performed... You know it actually inspired us, because they were very brave, and for the simple reason that they were fighting for their country. So there was a phrase that she [Ambuya Nehanda] said, when she was being hanged. 'Our bones will rise, you can kill me now, but our bones will rise against you'. As I speak that phrase it sort of gives you an inexplicable feeling of wanting to take it from there and go forward, you see? So the inspiration was that, 'My bones will rise', and we were told that we were the bones, the very bones that Ambuya was saying' (VaKanda, 2001, quoted in Fontein, 2006: 144)

⁹ For more detailed reviews of this body of literature see Alexander (1996) and Maxwell (1999)

Here we see how the national discourse not only draws a linear history between the 'country' of Nehanda and Kaguvi – although records suggest that no such 'country' existed at that point – and the struggle for Zimbabwe, but also confers a spiritual sanctity upon those taking part in the liberation war; it constructs an identity with preordained status and legitimacy, based upon an imagined tradition of national self-determination and struggle¹⁰. Central to this identity is the winning, both symbolic and political, of the land, the historical terrain of struggle on which the battle for Zimbabwe has taken place.

Lan (1985), Ranger (1985) and Fontein (2006) have demonstrated how this mythology, strongly advocated by political elites, was furthered by guerrillas in rural areas during the struggle. As well as paying homage to their 'national' ancestral figures like Nehanda, guerrillas worked closely with local spirit mediums, and in doing so were incorporated into distinctively local narratives of traditional ancestry, and were granted access to sacred places usually only accessible by the elders and mediums of that specific area (Lan, 1985; Daneel, 1995). Fontein has shown how through the connections drawn by guerrillas and the people they worked amongst Great Zimbabwe became conceived of as not only an example of past African achievement and historical legitimacy as outlined by the nationalist parties, but also as a sacred site of national importance. The degree of variation among accounts, whereby Great Zimbabwe can be seen as a place where nationalist leaders consult ancestors, or as a place where spirit mediums from around the country would gather to strategise, is testament to the fact that this dimension of the site's importance to nationalism emerged from varied local discourses. As Fontein notes, 'in this process, these 'original' and 'authentic' imaginings were taken a great deal further by guerrillas and the 'traditionalists' they co-opted than most of the 'western-educated' and thoroughly 'modern' nationalist elite themselves would have gone' (Fontein, 2006: 147).

A common refrain among nationalists during the war was that the *povo*, the masses, would have to be 'conscientised', both in order to understand the political ideologies underpinning the nationalists plans for the country, and to build the 'unity' necessary to realise Zimbabwe's destiny as an independent and prosperous nation. As Mugabe reflected in 1982. 'The history of the national struggle for liberation as waged by my party, ZANU, has been the history of the mobilisation, conscientisation and direction of the broad oppressed masses as a national collectivity' (Mugabe, 1982: 1). But in the case of rural mobilisation we see how guerrillas had to negotiate already existing social and historical categories, and in doing so ensured that to some extent the dominant national discourse became hybridised when inculcating itself within local discourses of power and tradition. This is an important dimension to consider, that in terms of shaping the interpretation of symbols, institutions, and identities the dominant national discourse most

¹⁰ Of course here the imagination is most powerfully applied to the idea of 'national' struggle. There is no denying that such a tradition of African resistance exists, but what is important here is how it is interpreted and presented.

often propagated by elites will of necessity interact with contesting discourses over the constitution of their representation¹¹.

As a dominant national discourse of historical and sacred legitimacy resonated and deepened in rural Zimbabwe during the war, so the identity of *vana vevhu*, meaning 'son of the soil', calcified as an identity within this narrative. Most commonly used to describe those who took part in the nationalist movement, and the guerrillas who fought in the war, it is, as Bhebe observed, a 'powerful emotive term' and a central part of the 'liberation culture and language' (Bhebe, 1989: 101). It is a national signifier that connotes an identity whose foundations are the imagined histories of the first and second *Chimurenga*, the spiritual legitimacy of those who fought in them, and the sanctity of the terrain they fought for. If 'the people' are a united and authentic African collectivity, their 'destiny' is to be realised through the *vana vevhu*, the historical liberators of the nation. At independence a specially printed banner was hung across the nation, and on it a picture of the Nehanda medium hovered above that of Mugabe, himself depicted upon the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. The image was common on clothes, posters, and pamphlets (Lan, 1985: 218), and is a fitting manifestation of the centrality of this potent symbolism to the imagination of the Zimbabwean nation.

The Heroes after Independence

In 1980, following the Lancaster House negotiations and the resulting national constitution, elections were held in Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF recorded a triumphant victory. The future of the guerrillas from the Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), and the Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), formed an important part of the negotiations, and a strategy was developed for the demobilisation of the guerrilla armies, the incorporation of combatants into a new national army, and a more general reintegration of combatants into Zimbabwean society. Norma Kriger's extensive study of this phase, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe*, reveals how the identity of 'liberation hero' and the invocation of 'war credentials' were a constant symbolic means of legitimating claims to authority and resources. Throughout this period guerrilla appeals to government for rations, improved conditions, political support and jobs was centred on their identity as *vana vevhu*¹². As she notes, 'At the

¹¹ This process is complex, and local imaginings of place and history are themselves open to hybridisation or are simply absent from official narratives. For a discussion of how in post-independence Zimbabwe local histories and sacred imaginings of the Great Zimbabwe ruins were marginalised by the 'professionalised' and 'objectifying' heritage management of the site by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) see Fontein (2006, 2009)

¹² This period was also marred with conflict between the two parties, and the very visible marginalisation of ZIPRA guerrillas is well documented. See Kriger, 2003, Alexander et al (2000) for more details. See below for a discussion of this element of the post-independence period and the Gukurahundi in Matabeleland.

end of the assembly phase, the demobilised guerrillas were established as a privileged group, largely stripped of their armed power but with a potent resource in their symbolic status as liberators and fighters' (Kriger, 2003: 67).

Kriger notes that many guerrillas continued to use their noms de guerre after the demobilisation process, both in the army and workplaces (Kriger, 2003: 163). Pfukwa underlines the importance of this process by characterising Zimbabwean war names beyond the limited idea of a referential signifier, and as 'a social statement reflecting the bearer, the namer and the social environment within which the name is found' (Pfukwa, 2003: 16). In this sense the war name was a means of affirming a specific identity, a renaming within the context of the second *Chimurenga* and the sacred quest for national liberation. War names often concealed regional or ethnic affiliation, renounced colonial categories and sought to develop new social and ideological orientation. 'The process of renaming opened up new possibilities, attributes and values, in addition to reshaping ideologies and creating new concepts of the self as well as redefining the groups within which the self operated' (Pfukwa, 2007: 241). Names like Mbumburu (Bullets), Rwirai Nyika (Fight for the nation) and Chimedza Mabhunhu (He who swallows white men), were a way of imagining 'the identity of the fighter as part of a wider social discourse that questioned the status quo and explored new political, social and cultural identities' (Pfukwa, 2007: 245). The retention of war names in post-independence Zimbabwe was part of a process in which the identity of 'national hero' was maintained, valorised and politically and materially recognised.

When institutionally articulated, this identity became a legally protected status that endowed rights to resources, in the forms of demobilisation allowance, secure employment in the army, or employment opportunities and war pensions. As a legal and cultural identity it thus became an attractive prospect, and contestation for the right to be recognised as a 'hero' became prevalent. Kriger documents numerous accounts of fraudulent activities in the demobilisation period, as people posed as guerrillas to gain access to state-sponsored resources, or to acquire authority within workplaces and various bureaucratic divisions (Kriger, 2003: 88-91, 98, 118, 127).

This drew forward a question that still resonates in Zimbabwe today: Who is a war hero? It was at this early point that government support and reward for ex-combatants over other war participants – detainees, political prisoners, members of rural communities who had provided support to the armies, teachers in training camps, to name just some – became visible, as privileges were almost entirely reserved for active combatants. These groups began to protest and affirm the value of their participation in the struggle, and so contestation over identification became an important part of how the second *Chimurenga* was remembered and politically recognised in independent Zimbabwe¹³. The legal recognition of participation in the war was established as a means by which official national histories could be widened

¹³ See Chapter 3 for information on how claims to heroic status continue in Zimbabwe.

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¹³ See Chapter 3 for information on how claims to heroic status continue in Zimbabwe.

to include new claimants, and so a means by which individuals could gain access to a powerful social category. The title of 'national hero' and the claim to liberation credentials, and so to enshrined national status, became an ongoing arena of contest over national recognition and resources, and a register of political legitimacy.

The Commemorated Nation

Soon after independence the government oversaw a policy of national reinscription of public space. The erasure of colonial symbols and monuments was widespread; roads and places were renamed, and many statues of colonial figures, such as that of Cecil Rhodes in Harare, were removed. In line with the reconciliation policy of the time (see the next chapter), only those symbols deemed politically controversial were removed. However Nathan Shamuyarira, then head of the National Monument Committee overseeing the project, revealed an interesting conceptualisation of the term 'reconciliation':

'The occasion of removing statues and monuments and erecting new ones is not one of recrimination, but rather a time of reconciliation – reconciling us to the reality of our independence, the death of colonialism and the national aspirations of the people. It is an occasion for the proper marriage of our past history and our dedication to the new social order' (Shamuyarira, quoted in Kriger, 1995: 141)¹⁴

In this sense the policy of national inscription, the reclaiming of public space to reflect the newly determined nation, is a means of reconciling people with a new national history. It is the imagining of an appropriate, or 'proper' in Shamuriya's terms, presentation of histories that reflect the new 'social order'. In other words, an official national history of Zimbabwe is performed and reified through the creation of sites of memorial and commemoration, and this is seen as representative of the newly realised nation.

Important in this process were the creation of two forms of national commemoration; the proclamation of two public holidays on August the 11th and 12th, called Heroes Days, and the construction of a Heroes Acre just outside Harare. The Heroes Acre contains walls painted with murals depicting the liberation struggle, a statue depicting three heroic guerrillas, a tower upon which sits the Eternal Flame of liberation, and a tomb of the Unknown Soldier. National iconography, from flags to images of the emblematic Zimbabwe Bird figure from Great Zimbabwe, is vividly present across the site¹⁵. The Heroes Acre official brochure explicitly links the site to the idea of a national collectivity based on the struggle against colonialism. Heroes Acre is:

¹⁴ This meaning of 'reconciliation' as acquiescence to a new political order is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

¹⁵ These observations are borrowed from Richard Werbner's article on Heroes Acre and memory in postcolonial Zimbabwe. See Werbner (1998).

'an expression as well as a symbol of the indefatigable collective will of Zimbabweans to be the makers of their own history, and to be their own liberators by participating in the protracted, arduous and bitter struggle for self-determination... [it] arouses national consciousness, forges national unity and identity...[it] is a symbol of the masses struggle for freedom that transcends tribalism, ethnicism, regionalism and racism' (Ministry of Information, 1996: 2)

Despite this endeavour Heroes Acre reflects the struggle over the identity of 'national hero' by drawing interesting demarcations between those deserving of certain levels of sacralisation in the name of national history. The brochure states that those eligible for burial at the site will have:

'laid down their lives for Zimbabwe to be born and for the masses to be liberated. They subordinated their individual interests to the collective interests of Zimbabwe as a whole... Theirs was an unwavering support for the cause of freedom and justice for which they accepted and endured suffering and brutality with fortitude' (Ministry of Information, 1996: 5)

However this became an act of self-memorialisation for the governing elite, as only members of the inner-circle of those nationalist figures who formed the first government of Zimbabwe were buried at the site (Kriger, 1995; Werbner, 1998). Their families receive state pensions and grants, and the heroes' funerals are entirely state sponsored. Former guerrillas and lesser party members are restricted to Provincial or Local hero status, and in many cases are expected to finance the funerals themselves. Heroes Acre thus reflects a grading system of heroes, a ranked set of distinctions in which nationhood, or national value, is distributed unequally. The political elite in control of the memorialisation process is, as Werbner puts it, 'sacralising an imprint of itself on the Zimbabwean landscape' (Werbner, 1998: 78). It is worth quoting Werbner's analysis here at length:

'... one tension is represented at Heroes Acre by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the named, individualised tombstones of the distinguished heroes. The anonymous and empty Tomb is for all, and without distinction. Here nationality and citizenship are for all the people, and equality of sociality endures. Against that is the differentiated representation of the heroic dead in the individual tombstones. What is memorialised is the distinction of the select few, a national elite. It is the unmistakable representation of a nation of – in Zimbabwean usage – the *chef* over the *povo* or masses, a nation of graded levels, subordinating the local to the national'

It is important to remember that the national discourse has at its centre the identity of the 'hero', the sacred bearer of an ancient national destiny and symbol of the fight for the homeland. With this comes a historic legitimacy to lead the nation forwards. The image depicted on the independence banner of

Nehanda looking down upon his chosen successor, Mugabe, is resonant here. The elites' status as legitimate leaders of the nation, and the vehicle through which the masses can realise their sacred destiny, is temporally and spatially fixed through a state imposed system of commemoration and tribute in which some heroes are more legitimate than others.

The state memorialisation process has also been subject to contestation. ZAPU, who in the early and late 1980's was politically marginalised and its main area of support, Matabeleland, the subject of state imposed terror, consistently challenged the grading of heroes¹⁶. Most notably the renowned ZIPRA commander Lookout Masuku was not granted a state funeral at Heroes Acre, and this event along with other controversies over the bestowal of heroic status became a frame of reference by which ZAPU and other groups could contest the political authority of the ZANU elite, and so the party's historically granted legitimacy. By asking the question 'Who is a hero?' they are challenging the moral and political legitimacy of official national history and the practices of national elites.

Conclusion

What is interesting about the above observations is how the national discourse evolved in Zimbabwe on a set of contradictions that complicate any answer to the question: who belongs to the nation, and what part do they play within it? In one sense the nationalist parties imagined a nation in the form of their own political goals; majority rule, democracy, one-man one-vote, and a united citizenry. In this formulation the nation is not delimited, margins of nationhood are drawn widely. Rights are bestowed equally and legally.

However, this vision of nationhood *as* citizenry is tempered by the discursive boundaries of an imagined Zimbabwe that is constructed as primordial through its temporal link to ancient civilisation. Here the discursive entity of the 'the people' is given an elemental character, an essentialised 'tradition' and cultural 'Africaness'. It is presented as a modern manifestation of something prior to colonialism and Rhodesian rule, a united collective of the indigenous. Immediately we face a different idea of what constitutes the national subject, a different framework by which we can judge political practice, the granting of rights, and the allocation of resources. The discursive construction of an ancient and sacred nation, and a citizenry and political order defined by democratic values, is potentially fraught with contradiction and fragility. It offers different ways of thinking about what constitutes the national collective, and in doing so how members of this collective are identified in political practice. As we shall see this contradiction has been played out in the ways rights, citizenship and justice have been conceived of in Zimbabwe.

¹⁶ For more information on these events see Kriger, 1995.

A mythological national history has also constructed an identity of 'national hero' as central to the imagining of the nation. This has taken two overlapping forms. Firstly, the guerrillas are recognised within the national discourse as the spiritually ordained liberators of the nation, the *vana vevhu*. With this identity comes cultural and political status and moral authority. Secondly, through a process of official memorialisation and historical commemoration the political elite who gained control of the state have created a distinction between themselves and other national heroes. By placing themselves at the head of a hierarchy of national historical authority they have endowed political legitimacy on themselves as the valid leaders of the nation. This valorisation of heroic nationhood has created a site of contest whereby the legitimacy of political authority can be challenged by questioning who deserves the identity of the 'hero', and by contesting official national histories through recourse to unrecognised struggle credentials.

THREE

Unity and Development

In this chapter I want to examine the question of ‘national unity’ within the national discourse. How it was conceived of, and practised, by the nationalist parties in power, was an important question in Zimbabwe in the 1980’s and 1990’s. What is considered here is how a different meaning of ‘national unity’ became a central political principle once ZANU-PF came to power, one that moved beyond ‘national unity’ as a people united as being Zimbabwean, and instead came to mean political unity as the recognition of ZANU-PF as rightful and legitimate representatives of the nation, its people and their interests.

The second part of the chapter will focus on how the political and socioeconomic teleology of the nationalist movement – its policy agenda concerning economic development – created different discursive representations and practices of some of the central identities and symbols at the heart of the national discourse. The pursuit of economic modernisation and technical development had important implications for the architecture of institutions, rights to land, and the state’s role in controlling and ideologically defining social resistance to government policy.

‘National Unity’ as a political principle

As described in the previous chapter, national unity amongst the nationalist parties was not taken for granted. It was stressed as one of their fundamental aims. The idea of building ‘national consciousness’ was how ‘the people’ could be realised, and in itself became the justification for the legitimacy of the nationalist parties’ pursuit of power: for the nationalist party to speak on behalf of ‘everyone’, they must endeavour to realise that ‘everyone’. As the 1980 ZANU-PF constitution states, a central aspect of party policy is to ‘Promote national consciousness and the unity of all of our people in pursuance of aims and objectives’ (ZANU-PF, 1980). However, the historically endowed legitimacy of the ruling elite to lead the nation and pursue its destiny has seen a reinterpretation of the idea of ‘national unity’ beyond the idea of a national collectivity.

The national discourse outlined the status of ‘national hero’, and in doing so placed the nationalist elites at the top of a hierarchy of historical authority. There is a certain logic here: the discourse conceives of a

unified, singular 'African people' through history, and within this narrative a set of leaders endowed with a sacred authority to represent their interests. They are not merely positioned as 'heroes', but as legitimate leaders, those figures who represent the wider interests of 'the people'. If the ruling elite are constructed within the national discourse as the 'rightful' leaders of the nation, then unity becomes not only a case of 'a people united through being Zimbabwean' but also as 'united in the support of the party that speaks on behalf of the Zimbabwean people, that represents them, and legitimately defines their historical destiny'. This interpretation had serious implications for Zimbabwean society, laying down a framework for some degree of racial tolerance through the policy of reconciliation, and, at the same time, violent state-sponsored terror. It was also a crucial rationale of the one-party state agenda pursued by the government¹⁷.

The Conditions of Reconciliation

At the dawn of independence ZANU-PF and the newly formed government began a stated policy of reconciliation, an approach that at one point saw Zimbabwe heralded as 'a model of racial reconciliation in a post-guerrilla war context' (Raftopoulos, 2004: viii). I quote here from Mugabe's much referenced speech on the evening of his party's victory in the 1980 national elections:

'Surely this is now the time to beat our swords into ploughshares so we can attend to the problems of developing our economy and society... I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery' (Mugabe, quoted in de Waal, 1990: 46)

¹⁷ I would argue that it is imperative to trace this meaning of 'national unity' back to the intra-party conflicts of the 1960's and 1970's, what Masipula Sithole called 'the struggles within the struggle', although regrettably the length and scope of this study prevents this taking place here. Some of the factors often cited as explanations of these disputes include disagreements over lobbying for foreign support, the extent to which armed conflict should be pursued, ethnic factors, and the Sino-Soviet divide. For a reading that emphasises personality conflict and ethnicity see Sithole's *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle* (1999) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008). For a study that interprets the major conflicts within the parties as the manifestations of a clear divide between Marxist and bourgeoisie elements of the emerging ruling class in Zimbabwe see Moore (1991). What needs to be considered is how the rival parties 'spoke' for the nation, how their justifications to represent 'the people' were grounded in a renunciation of ethnic identity or particular interests, and how rival parties were represented as somehow outside of the nation, as 'ethnic' or as somehow 'selling out' the nation. In these representations we can begin to discover how the legitimacy of national leadership depended on how the led, 'the people', and their relationship to elites, were constructed. This I believe is an important research agenda for future studies.

Mugabe further elaborated on the underlying logic of this approach:

'Let us constitute a oneness derived from our common objective and total commitment to build a great Zimbabwe that will be the pride of all Africa. Let us deepen our sense of belonging and engender a common interest that knows no race, colour or creed. Let us truly become Zimbabweans with a single loyalty. Long live our freedom!' (Mugabe, quoted in Ministry of Information, 1980)

Here the principle is clear; the 'oneness' of national unity must be derived from a 'total commitment' to building a great Zimbabwe that will alleviate the 'problems of developing our economy and society'. Reconciliation in this sense is the conflation of becoming 'Zimbabwean' with 'a single loyalty' to the aims and objectives of economic and social development. If we consider that the substance and protocols of this socio-economic project are laid down by the newly elected government then implicit in this formulation is the recognition that 'loyalty' is therefore also to those national elites who now hold power. National unity is the 'common interest' as represented by the nationalist elites. Here the distinctions between 'national unity' and 'national loyalty' become ill-defined, a blurring of the social markers of nationhood that has plagued Zimbabwe from the 1980's until today.

It should be noted here that the reconciliation 'policy' was never exactly a government policy at all, in that there was no specific governing legislation, no programmatic plans or applied policies, and no institutions or bodies responsible for overseeing and monitoring. It is widely acknowledged that instead the policy was a calculated set of rhetorical statements, like those above, aimed directly at white members of the population¹⁸.

Various interpretations exist that try to piece together the rationale for the policy of reconciliation. It can be seen as a pragmatic policy of national security used to placate the threat of internal disturbance by former members of the Rhodesian security forces, or the external threat of South African intervention (see de Waal, 1990), or political reassurance that sought to allay fears of retribution amongst the white community (Sachikonye, 2004; Moyo, 1992). At the same time it was a political necessity stemming from the constraints of the Lancaster House constitution, which protected property rights for 10 years, dictated that white-owned land had to be purchased by the government only under a 'willing buyer, willing seller' agreement, and guaranteed a white electoral monopoly of 20 seats in the 100 seat parliament (Raftopoulos, 1994; Alexander, 2006). For Herbst (1990) it constituted a tacit agreement between the ruling elite and whites that, although existing whites could stay and be free from discrimination and high levels of state interference in the private sector, their children would not face the same protection, and indigenisation of the economy and the public sector would intensify within a generation.

¹⁸ It should be noted that there were a series of key political appointments of white figures, including the retention of Ken Flower as head of the security services, and two senior white ministers.

Although economic policy and state practice would have important implications for how whites were identified in Zimbabwe, as I discuss below, what I want to focus on here is how the rhetoric around reconciliation allowed for white entry into the social category of nationhood, and how implicit in this was the conflation of 'national unity' and 'national loyalty'. This entailed an erasure of the historical record, or a rearticulation of that record whereby whites, and white farmers, are no longer remembered as central to the colonial project that the nationalists fought against. They are no longer the enemy from whom the country was liberated. This must entail, as Blair Rutherford has pointed out, a form of anti-memory which cleanses present identities of past wrongs (Rutherford, 2004: 552). The dismantling and erasure of colonial identifications could be seen in the systematic spatial reinscription process, whereby statues and memorials of colonial figures were removed by the government. But 'forgetting' associations with a history of subjugation and exploitation was also a rhetorical device used by ZANU-PF, as exemplified in Mugabe's independence speech:

'If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten' (Mugabe, quoted in Ministry of Information, 1980)

Here the anti-memory over colonial complicity means a unity of 'interest, loyalty, rights and duties', but in practice it meant a retraction of the white community from public politics and contestation. For a large part in the 1980's they concentrated on day-to-day business, and sometimes local government affairs, while relying on public pressure groups, such as the Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries (CZI) and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), to lobby the government behind the scenes (Rutherford, 2004: 553; Moyo, 1992: 22; Herbst, 85, 137)¹⁹.

This tacit understanding that there must be no political activity that would compromise the control of the governing party was disrupted in the 1985 elections, when the emergence of the Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ) under Ian Smith in 1985, widely seen as the reincarnation of the Rhodesian Front, saw the party win 15 of the 20 seats reserved for whites. The reaction by ZANU-PF was that this was against the inherent principles of reconciliation. Emmerson Mnangagwa, then Minister of State for National Security, said:

¹⁹ The power of these groups, far larger than other groups such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), cannot be underestimated, and to a large extent they allowed for the continued prosperity and security of white capital after independence (Moyo, 1992; Raftopoulos, 1994).

‘the vote cast by the majority of the white electorate has shown us that the trust we placed in whites and our belief that they were getting reconciled to the new political order was a trust and belief that was not deserved... [Whites] have spilled the blood of thousands of our people... The vote has proved that they have not repented in any way’ (Mnangagwa, 1985, quoted in Kriger, 2005: 12)

Again in 1990 Nathan Shamuyarira labelled those whites who planned to vote for Edgar Tekere’s Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), then in an alliance with the CAZ, as ‘anti-reconciliation’. Eddison Zvogbo put forward an image of the ZUM as simply the CAZ in disguise:

‘The Rhodesian Front of Ian Smith plunged us into war. When Smith realised he had lost the war he found some blacks to do his work for him. ZANU sought reconciliation after the war, but the RF did not die and so... there’s no such thing as ZUM, only CAZ’ (Zvogbo, quoted in Kriger, 2005: 15)

The fragility of the identity of the ‘reconciled white’ is exemplified by the ease with which past discursive identifications are brought forcefully into political rhetoric. Here the idea of reconciliation as unified loyalty is evident, most explicitly in Mnangagwa’s assertion that reconciliation is about acquiescence to ‘the new political order’, and in the absence of this compliance, the remembering of the death of thousands of Africans at white hands.

***Gukurahundi* and the Dissidents**

From 1983 to late 1986 Matabeleland, and part of the Midlands, was the scene of escalating violence between various government agencies and small numbers of former guerrillas who had fled the demobilisation and integration scheme. In events described by Mugabe as *Gukurahundi* (the rain that washes away the chaff before summer rains) it is estimated that approximately 20,000 people lost their lives, most of them civilian supporters of ZAPU who were suspected of having allegiances to those who became known as the ‘dissidents’ (Phimister, 2008: 197).

These events had their origins in the history of hostility and competition between ZAPU and ZANU, and the regional patterns of recruitment and operation during the liberation war (Alexander et al, 2000: 181). After the elections in 1980 it became even clearer that political support followed the regional and ethnic lines established during the conflict, with ZAPU’s membership and electoral constituency dominated by Ndebele speakers from Matabeleland and ZANU’s broadly Shona speaking. The two parties had a long history of conflict after the party split in 1963, as well as a series of internal struggles and divergences. Armed conflict between ZIPRA and ZANLA was also prolific, in the field and in training camps in neighbouring states, most notably in Tanzania after the formation of the collaborative ZIPA

(Zimbabweans People's Army) when ZANLA guerrillas and the Tanzanian Defence Force disarmed and massacred a large number of ZIPRA fighters (Kriger, 2003: 25; White, 2003).

Many guerrillas from both armies refused to gather in designated Assembly Points (AP) to be integrated into the nascent ZNA (Zimbabwean National Army). Their reasons included fear that the Rhodesian Army would attack them, disagreement with the terms of the settlement, the wish to campaign for their parties, or simply to return home (Alexander et al, 2000). Reports of violence and looting by some guerrillas were widespread, and security forces were deployed to control and capture them. Although initially admonished by both parties, and labelled 'outlaws', 'unruly elements' and 'renegades', after the elections armed men on the loose in Matabeleland came to be known as 'dissidents', and their motives and the threat they presented were increasingly cast in political terms (Alexander et al, 2000: 185).

Guerrillas were moved from rural AP's to urban areas, and clashes flared up between ZIPRA and ZANLA guerrillas. ZANU politicians in the new government increasingly couched their rhetoric in terms of the political threat posed by ZIPRA and ZAPU, with Mugabe noting 'very sinister undertones, a definite organised pattern' to the violence (Alexander et al, 2000: 188). At an election rally in 1980 Enos Nkala, an Ndebele ZANU-PF Minister, declared that 'from today the PF [ZAPU] has declared itself the enemy of ZANU-PF' and encouraged supporters to form 'vigilante committees' to defend themselves against the perceived threat (Kriger, 2003: 77). Political discord between the parties continued and in 1982, after arms caches were allegedly found at the homes of senior ZAPU politicians, Nkomo and other ZAPU ministers were sacked from the government. Senior ZIPRA commanders, including Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa, were arrested on charges of treason, and despite the dismissal of evidence in their court trials they remained in jail until 1986.

As more ZIPRA guerrillas fearing persecution by the government and ZANLA fled into rural Matabeleland, Nkomo and ZAPU were regularly charged with organising their activities as part of a choreographed effort to overthrow the government. This was despite consistent opposition by ZAPU to the desertions and the return to arms of their ZIPRA guerrillas. Tension and paranoia was only increased in 1982 when South Africa began operations aimed at destabilising the country, including the recruitment and arming of a group of Zimbabwean insurgents called Super ZAPU operating in Matabeleland, which only further legitimised ZANU-PF's military response.

The violence in Matabeleland significantly worsened with the deployment of the notorious 5th Brigade, a North Korean trained unit directly answerable to the Prime Minister and explicitly intended for 'internal defence purposes'. Its political rationale was obvious in the purging of all ex-ZIPRA members from its ranks, and the chosen victims of its violent but systematic and organised campaign. In a widespread operation it targeted ZAPU party chairman and civil servants, former ZIPRA combatants and refugees,

and thousands of civilians. The often grotesquely violent and harrowing nature of its activities is borne witness to in the individual testimonies of its victims (see CCJP, 1997). The 5th Brigade operated on a background of political rhetoric that justified the targeting of civilians on the grounds that 'We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who a dissident is', as Mugabe put it. It also equated support for ZAPU with support for dissidents. This was exemplified by Enos Nkala's 1983 threat that if you support ZAPU 'you will die or be sent to prison', a view advocated by several other government ministers (CCJP, 1997: 44).

Despite the obvious ethnic dimension to the conflict, the political justifications were pivoted on a discourse of 'national unity' that polarised the characters of ZAPU and ZANU as self-interested and tribal on one hand, and national and unifying on the other. In April 1983 Minister of State Sydney Sekeramayi told a rally that 'the army will stay a long, long time... the majority of people realise they have been misled by PF-ZAPU... [and] will understand the national character of PF-ZANU' (CCJP, 1997: 54). At an election rally in 1985 Mugabe said that 'people in Matabeleland are being tortured, robbed and murdered because of the selfish political interests of Dr Joshua Nkomo... I am asking you to vote for ZANU-PF because we want to be one people' (Phimister, 2008: 209).

Again in 1985 Mugabe went on to underline that the problems in Matabeleland were that the presence of ZAPU and the dissidents were themselves emblematic of national disunity, and stood in the way of people understanding that they were a coalescent aspect of an inevitable national collective:

'It is really a pity that we are talking in terms of Matabeleland and the rest of the country... Really the problem is Nkomo and ZAPU as I see it. Nkomo and ZAPU and the dissidents. Nkomo cannot accept a secondary role in our political order and so he must organise the people tribally, and if they cannot be organised tribally, he must set the dissidents on them so that they will do his will. We have been discussing this issue with the people of Matabeleland at various levels and there is no doubt in our mind that it's more the fact of the fear of the dissidents... They [the people of Matabeleland] are not a strange people, they are not a foreign element – they are part and parcel of our population and we have interacted with them at various levels... and we are satisfied that without ZAPU, without the dissident element, they will fall in line... we do not distinguish them from people elsewhere. Their fate is intertwined with the fate of others. Their destiny is the same as the destiny of other people and we never talk in terms of Ndebeles, Shonas, Vendas, Tongas – we never do that... In fact we discourage that in our own political philosophy. The people in ZANU did not vote for me because they were against the Ndebeles... Everywhere we went we told the people they were one, and so it is the oneness of the people we are more interested in' (Mugabe, 1985, quoted in Phimister, 2008: 209-210)

We are reminded once again that through the national elites imagining of 'the people' they are discursively defined and delimited as a collectivity; as tribe-less and monolithic in their 'oneness'. For ZANU-PF to speak for all of Zimbabwe it must realise this 'oneness' by constantly asserting it; they 'told the people they were one', and that ZANU-PF had 'a national character', and they must erase any imagining that subverts this unity, in this case the ruthless political ambition of Nkomo and his tendency to 'tribalise' the people of Matabeleland. To 'speak' in terms of sub-national identities is proscribed, only the national will be spoken²⁰.

It is in these terms that the national discourse 'speaks' the people of Matabeleland into nationhood, through a representation of them as tribeless, homogenously Zimbabwean and so politically represented by ZANU-PF. The praxis of this articulation of nationhood is coercion and suppression, but it finds legitimacy in the inevitable, the idea of a common 'destiny' and 'fate'. Mugabe is telling supporters of ZAPU that they are part of this destiny, this is his knowledge which he must share with them. The implication is that national destiny is interpreted by ZANU-PF, the only legitimate leaders of the nation²¹. In this case loyalty to ZANU-PF becomes a marker of nationhood, a standard by which citizens can be seen to have realised their 'oneness' and common destiny. The 1980 election poster that states *ZANU-PF VANHU, VANHU IZANU-PF* (ZANU-PF is the people, the people are ZANU-PF) is perhaps telling of the inherent logic of this formulation. For ZAPU and the people of Matabeleland, and the white supporters of CAZ or ZUM, political disloyalty brings forth discursive representations that cast dissenters as exterior to the nation, somehow outside of that defined as inescapable and preordained.

If the national discourse represented events in Matabeleland as a matter of unity and nationhood, this exclusion or silencing of ethnic interpretations was not mirrored amongst communities at the receiving end of its violent practice. In their extensive social history of Matabeleland, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) note local memories of an almost entirely Shona 5th Brigade often making recourse to ethnic justifications for their use of violence. The events were interpreted as ethnic persecution:

'[People] came to see the conflict not as one fought against the dissidents but against the Ndebele and ZAPU. In local accounts there is constant slippage between an emphasis on tribalism and on inter-party

²⁰ This silence in the national discourse over ethnic identity is symptomatic of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya call the 'echoing silence' of ethnicity in Zimbabwe generally. 'Until recently, Zimbabweans have been conspicuously silent about questions of ethnicity. As in the colonial period, especially during the days of the nationalist liberation struggle, all attempts to discuss ethnic identities, especially their manifestation in the political and economic spheres, were brushed aside' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Muzondidya, 2007: 276).

²¹ One is reminded here of the ZANU-PF liberation song 'Zvinoziba neZANU', in which the people ask how they can defeat the Rhodesians and gain their independence, to which the chorus answer is *Zvinozibwa neZANU* (only ZANU has the answer) (Pongweni, 1992: 20).

conflict as the motive force behind the Fifth Brigade's violence... people elided the categories of Ndebele and ZAPU: an attack on the Ndebele was an attack on ZAPU, an attack on ZAPU was an attack on the Ndebele... The Fifth Brigades greatest 'success' may have been in hardening ethnic prejudice and in bolstering a strong identification between ethnicity and political affiliation' (Alexander et al, 2000: 223)

Drawing on interviews with former dissidents Alexander notes that they at once lamented what they saw as the ethnicisation of what had been an inclusive political project, and justified raids into Shona areas on the grounds that the government was persecuting Ndebele people (Alexander, 2004: 170). In their important report into the civil strife of the 1980's The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) also concluded that it 'hardened' ethnic identifications and brought a broad feeling of alienation from the national body politic (CCJP, 1997: 59-60). The irony here is that, to paraphrase Richard Werbner, the insistence on and enforcement of a de-ethnicised national unity 'fed and in turn was fed by its antithesis, the polarisation of... two super-tribes, the Shona against the Ndebele' (Werbner, 1991: 159).

There has been a noticeable increase in Ndebele cultural organisations in the region since the disturbances, and a continuing discourse around ideas of political reform to introduce federal government or even an independent Ndebele state (Raftopoulos, 1994: 19). Ndlovu-Gatsheni has traced the genealogy of what he calls 'Ndebele particularism' in the historical construction of Ndebele ethnicity. He finds that the massacres in Matabeleland have been a more modern occurrence in a sequence of events that have historically galvanised a long-standing trend of Ndebele self-determination. This sequence has continued to manifest itself in radical Ndebele cultural and political organisations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 119-122). We are reminded that the premise of Zimbabwean nationhood, the idea that there exists a definable national community, was not settled by the imaginings of the nationalist elites. Instead the silences of the national discourse, its inability to speak ethnicity as social category within Zimbabwe, and its authoritarian practices, form a kind of exclusion that has the potential to imbricate itself into the series of historical processes that have shaped and produced ethnic identification.

The One-Party State

The Unity Accord of 1987 that saw ZAPU subsumed into ZANU-PF led the new united party to declare once again that it would seek to establish a one-party state in Zimbabwe (Unity Accord, 1987). In 1990 the restrictions of the Lancaster House Constitutional Agreement, which guaranteed the rights of people to form and join political parties, would no longer be in place and ZANU-PF could begin to work towards the completion of an agenda that it had begun to set in the early 1980's (Moyo, 1991: 83). With ZAPU now no longer legally active the electoral threat of Matabeleland, which they had won comfortably in 1980 and 1985, would also be extinguished.

As the likelihood of a one-party state increased so the debates around its suitability to Zimbabwe began to flourish amongst party members and Zimbabwean intellectuals. Academics began to analyse the historical and ideological foundations of the concept, situating it in a wider African and global tradition with a variety of antecedents and explanatory factors. Many observers sought a materialist critique in which a petit-bourgeoisie scramble to keep other factions from the political power that allows for personal accumulation (Zimunya, 1991; Musarurwa, 1991; Mutambara, 1991). Others interrogated the justifications that presented one-party rule as the modern manifestation of ancient and authentic forms of African social organisation (Sithole, 1989; Mandaza, 1991; Nabudere, 1989). Drawing from Nyerere's Ujamaa, this discourse seeks to find pre-colonial precedents for the one-party state in traditional social organisation, and saw ZANU-PF cite the idea that in an African community there is 'only one chief' (Nabudere, 1989: 3; Meyns, 1989: 184). These critics broadly found that these ideas of historical lineage were largely inaccurate affectations, pointing out that there were nothing like the very modern forms of party and state found in the African past, and that pre-colonial social structure could often be exploitative and undemocratic.

For Sithole (1991) and Mandaza (1991) the Leninist idea of the one single authentic vanguard party is an important foundation for the one-party state in Socialist African countries and had significant influence in Zimbabwe. Sithole argued that democratic centralism as a form of deliberation and debate is a resonant form of political organisation to nationalist parties whose allegiance was often with the Soviet Union and China, but it could easily be manipulated to serve the interests of those who propose it. Mandaza also asserts that implicit theoretical justification for one-party state rule could be found in the 'modernisation thesis', with its emphasis on unity and strong leadership to counter the inevitable instability and strife that occurred as developing countries moved towards a Western model of development (Mandaza, 1991: 22-23).

These analyses are undoubtedly relevant to the Zimbabwean case, and illustrate the complex origins of the drive for the one-party state in Africa. However, as Meyns and Moyo (1991) point out, the justifications given for the one-party state in Zimbabwe were most commonly embedded in the discourse around 'national unity' and were a continuation of the agenda that sought to remove alternative centres of political support, most obviously ZAPU. At the centre of the debate around the one-party state in Zimbabwe was the 'aim of maintaining and consolidating national unity' (Meyns, 1989: 185), a concept deemed by Moyo to be considered 'sacrosanct' by ZANU-PF (Moyo, 1991: 89).

In 1984 Mugabe stated:

'We must be nationally united and therefore it is necessary that we show this image to our people, the image of being one, and the best way of doing it is to have one political umbrella under which all shades

of opinion can be accommodated... We will not go about a one-party state in an arbitrary manner. We realise that we have various opinions in the country – we have various ethnic groups; we have different races, different religious bodies and men of different religious persuasions – and that therefore from a political view it is necessary that we try to cater for these heterogeneous opinions of our people, but we do that under a homogeneous arrangement that recognises that first and foremost we are one Zimbabwe' (Mugabe, 1984, quoted in Meyns, 1989: 185)

Here again we see the desire to 'show' the people of Zimbabwe their 'oneness', to illustrate it in order to realise it. The 'best way' of doing so is through a political apparatus that reflects the position of ZANU-PF as the legitimate embodiment of the nation, and as the bearer of its destiny, the 'umbrella' under which people gather. At the same time the one-party state produces a system of governance that ensures that any opinion stemming from a sub-national identity or affiliation is subsumed under a 'homogeneous arrangement', a way of ensuring that these concerns must be of a national nature. It is an institutional composition under which contestation and deliberation can take place, and interests can be represented, without galvanising other forms of social and political identification, and so without threatening the unity of all Zimbabweans. It also recognises and preserves the only legitimate incarnation of 'one Zimbabwe', ZANU-PF.

The 1985 ZANU-PF election manifesto illustrates that within this discourse is a logical causal relationship between an institutional arrangement that preserves national unity and the fulfilment of the task of economic and social development:

'Unity is our first task towards the attainment of a just society where everyone's needs will be met. Zimbabwe will only develop when colour, tribe, sex, language and region are no longer of consequence in determining how our wealth is to be distributed... That is why, in line with our Second Congress Resolution, we pledge to work towards the attainment of a One-Party State... That is why ZANU-PF seeks to bring all Zimbabweans under its umbrella so that there is only One Leader – the Party – for One Zimbabwe... we shall establish one party to represent the interests of all working people in Zimbabwe, all those who seek to abolish the exploitation of man by man and bring about justice for all' (ZANU-PF, 1985: 5)

Here national unity in the form of the one-party state is explicitly regarded as the condition under which the nation can realise its developmental goals. However it was in the discourses around modernisation and development, and the consolidation of state authority, that alternative representations and practices emerged that were often contrary to the symbols and identities of the national discourse.

The Developmental Discourse

Rural Zimbabwe has long been regarded as a bifurcated space, with sharp distinctions in social formation, power relations, and discursive representations between commercial land, traditionally farmed and owned by whites, and communal land, home of the peasantry (Rutherford, 2001; Alexander, 2006). Rutherford notes that amongst the analyses and prescriptions of academics and policy makers this divide is most often represented as a dual economy; white land is commercial and productive, or seen as an exploitative capitalist sector, while communal land is traditional, subsistence based agriculture, or a pre-capitalist sector where pre-colonial social relations are used to underwrite the low wage reproduction of African labour. As Rutherford notes:

'The dual economy model not only explains rural Zimbabwe but carries with it a prescription for its future development: Africans will 'modernise' by becoming either full time workers in the capitalist sector, or self-sufficient peasants enjoying government support and land redistributed from the commercial farms' (Rutherford, 2001: 8)

This dominant narrative has produced a juxtaposition of social categories between 'commercial farmers' and 'African peasants', and within this lies a developmental teleology. Those in communal land will, in one way or another, be subject to a transformative agenda that seeks to modernise social and economic relations.

This teleological developmentalism has seen communal areas subject to a history of state interventions, in both colonial and post-colonial eras. In the 1930's and 1940's as colonial administrators faced increasing pressure for more efficient production in the colonies and political self-determinism grew amongst Africans, 'native' areas became of increasing concern to colonial governments. Policy prescriptions in the colonies began to be defined through the paradigm of 'development'; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) provided plans and funds aimed at replicating European countries through planned industrialisation and the opening up of markets for northern economies (Rutherford, 2001: 22). Rutherford quotes Escobar, saying 'Development, as a mode of thinking and a source of practices, soon became an omnipresent reality' (Rutherford, 2001: 22).

State planners in Southern Rhodesia strengthened bureaucratic control and increased state interventions into 'native' areas as discourses of 'technical development' and 'modernisation' became a powerful epistemological current in defining relations between colonial authority and African people (Alexander, 2006: 45-47; Drinkwater, 1991: 40-72). The 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA), and numerous plans after this, sought to consolidate state authority, centralise land planning, and stabilise and rationalise land (Alexander, 2006: 45; Drinkwater, 1991: 66-74). As Rutherford explains:

'... resting on the authority of Western science, and the common anthropological assumption of the time that African society was 'traditional' in contrast to European society, these plans were explained as a means to assist the evolution of Africans into the 'modern' world' (Rutherford, 2001: 23)

The colonial state was far from monolithically powerful, and was not always immovably opposed to 'traditional' systems of social organisation. It is perhaps better understood as heterogeneous, in that it often relied on negotiation with local administration and mediation with local actors to ensure a more nuanced integration of 'modern' and 'traditional' power systems (Moyo, 1995: 70). The portrayal of 'natives' as un-modern and traditional often justified a retraction of state intervention on the premise that Africans were 'too mired in irrationality and superstition' for technical development to work, especially in the 1960's and 1970's as the effects of the NLHA increased political resistance to colonial authority (Alexander, 2006: 79).

However, discourses around development and modernisation provided powerful modes of interpretation that shaped state practice and official representations of rural Africans and land even after the end of white rule. After 1980 the new Zimbabwean government embarked on a policy of reconstruction, development and redistribution under a banner of socialism that aimed to reverse the political and material inequalities inherited from the Rhodesian regime. It saw a significant investment in education and health and much international donor support. However, this project was heavily tempered by political pragmatism and the restrictions of the Lancaster House constitution, and was 'decisively shaped by the particular modernising agenda and practices of its Rhodesian predecessor' (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 4).

As Alexander notes, in contests over land in the 1980's 'the appeal of the opposition between 'modernity' and 'tradition', so long a characteristic of the Rhodesian state (and the analyses thereof) lived on, both as a means of contesting and constructing authority, and of justifying the imposition of 'modernising' policies on people construed as traditional and thus resistant to 'development' (Alexander, 2006: 11). The national discourse had set the 'lost land' at the centre of the fight for independence. Land was presented as a sacred terrain, and the peasantry as ancestrally entitled to claim rights to it, but in post-independence Zimbabwe the duality of 'traditional' and 'modern' complicated this picture.

The national discourse had created a burden of expectation over land redistribution, and agrarian reform understandably became an imperative of the new government. In 1980 an estimated 6,000 white farmers owned 15.5 million hectares of land, or 39% of land in the country, most of it being considered the most fertile and suited to agricultural production. In contrast 4.5 million black farmers subsided on 16.4 million hectares of sub-prime land in the communal areas (Moyo, 1995). The government's land reform program sought to address this stark inequality through the promised resettlement of 162,000 households onto 9

million hectares of land, a transfer representing approximately 23% of households in communal areas (Sachikonye, 2004).

Initial redistribution of commercial land was forthcoming but was constrained by the Lancaster House constitution's enshrining of property rights and the 'willing buyer, willing seller' clause, and the increasing influence of the CFU and international donor organisations who emphasised that land redistribution had to be conceived of as a matter of economic significance rather than a political right. A consensus emerged amongst policy makers that commercial land was too valuable to redistribute widely, and so instead agrarian policy should focus on improvement within communal areas (Alexander, 2007: 115; Moyo, 1995).

This consensus began to shape policy on land resettlement, as grounds for settlement began to depend on the lands potential for rationalisation and productivity. 'The resettlement policy offered redistribution, but cast the land not as the historical right of a dispossessed people, but as productive space in need of close state regulation' (Alexander, 2007: 113). Commercial land was largely seen as 'indispensible' because of its economic value, and newly settled lands were envisioned as 'islands of modernity', with settlers expected to sever all ties with past methods of farming and enter under the tutelage of the state (Alexander, 2007: 114).

In the developmental discourse the images and characters of the national struggle are recast: land becomes a productive entity, ahistorical and unraced, white farmers become politically neutral figures, exemplars of modernity to be aspired to, and peasants become subject to their own economic potential as measured by standards of commercial productivity, rather than historically imbued with a sacred right to the land.

This was reflected in the slow pace of land reform. By 1989 only about 48,000 households had been resettled. As illegal squatting increased on land during the 1980's, often as a form of direct opposition to the strictures of resettlement policy, the contrasts and contradictions of the 'national' and the 'developmental' became frames by which contests over land rights could be represented. Squatters, state officials, customary rulers and local and national politicians could defend or condemn the illegal habitation of land in these terms.

An official for the Department of Agriculture and Technical Extension Services highlighted this when saying:

'Officials will say these people are squatters but these people will say, 'no, this is our motherland'. The Resettlement Officer has a lot of power but he knows if he moves these people the politicians will criticise him' (Alexander, 2007: 157)

Manicaland's Provincial Administrator argued that historical claims to land could not be recognised, a view supported by Mugabe:

'People wanted specific pieces of land because their forefathers lived there. But everyone used to live somewhere... We are bitter but we can't reverse... You must follow the procedures of the resettlement programme' (Alexander, 2007: 114)

'If we were to ask your forefathers whether they lived in the same area as their ancestors graves, the answer would be in the negative. Now that we are buying farms to resettle people, who will stay there if you want to protect ancestors graves? Of course we must protect our ancestors graves but we must stay on arable land where we can be productive' (Mugabe, 1985, quoted in Raftopoulos, 2003: 221)

Squatters, often supported by local politicians, chiefs or officials, justified their incursions into occupied land on the grounds of the national struggle for lost land. As one chief observed, 'they need the land that their children liberated from the hands of the white commercial settlers' (Alexander, 2007: 158).

Here we can see how discourses around development and modernisation can destabilise the identities and symbols connected to the land in the national discourse, and in doing so legitimate state control and economic policy. At the same time the national discourse is again a means of holding the government to account. Just as the guerrillas and ZAPU used liberation war credentials and their identities as heroes as a means of challenging the power of ZANU-PF, claims to authority over and rights to land are situated within a discourse that reasserts land as the sacred terrain of the nation.

Although seemingly contradictory these discursive claims to authority over the land often existed simultaneously, utilised by different actors in different circumstances, often in tandem. For example pressure for more extensive land redistribution and the imminent end of the Lancaster House constitution often saw ZANU-PF revert to radical rhetoric that drew upon the national discourse. In the 1990 elections Mugabe stated that 'Never again shall we be slaves in our own country... There shall never be a 'no' which we shall ever accept again from landowners we approach for land' (Alexander, 2007: 181). However the resulting Land Acquisition Act of 1992 came with the caveat that 'only those with the potential to be good farmers should be chosen for resettlement and proper services should be provided to ensure productive communities are established' (Chan, 2003: 76).

Conclusion

In the 1980's 'national unity' began to mean more than the 'conscientisation' of the masses into a 'national collective'; in the face of challenges to the government it saw the emergence of a discursive representation of ZANU-PF as the legitimate embodiment of the nation, a means by which nationhood could be measured. Political challenges drew forth discursive representations of political opponents that situated them outside of the nation, as either tribally motivated, or historically exploitative. If ZANU-PF represented 'the people' any challenges to them were against the nation. The challengers, no longer of 'the nation', relinquished any protection from coercion or suppression and were vulnerable to the violent practices of the state. This is a pattern of discursive representation of political opposition that would again rise to prominence in the late 1990's as political mobilisation against ZANU-PF increased.

However, the national discourse remained an important means of challenging ZANU-PF dominance. The discursive representation of lost lands remained a powerful means by which an emphasis on development and modernisation could be countered, and a frame of interpretation of identities and rights that proved resilient during the 1980's. Simultaneously drawn upon by both the government and those challenging it, the idea of indigenous right to land was an envisioned future that had the potential to dismantle the bifurcation of rural Zimbabwe and challenge the teleological duality of 'traditional' and 'modern' represented within it. In the 1990's, as economic conditions worsened and ZANU-PF hegemony was repeatedly challenged, the national discourse reasserted itself as the dominant narrative on land, and was acted out in radical and violent ways.

FOUR

The Third *Chimurenga*

The period of the third *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe has witnessed an intensification of the national discourse. As a system of representation the narratives, images and symbols of this discourse have become dominant as a means of interpreting and understanding political and social realities in the country. They have both informed and intensified the dichotomies and antagonisms that have come to define politics in post-2000 Zimbabwe: on one side a radical, redistributive program based on historical and nativistic grounds, and on the other a liberal critique, emphasising universal notions of human rights, the rule of law and citizenship.

Central to this has been a continuation of the political principle of 'national unity'. Opposition to ZANU-PF rule is discursively located as somehow outside of the nation, its history, and its 'people'. This 'people' have become increasingly defined in primordial and essentialist terms. The image of the 'African native' as the only legitimate national subject has become framed within a wider discourse that counterpoises an idea of authentic 'African' culture as inimical to 'racist' Western universalism.

The Zimbabwe Crisis

The failure of the governments one-party state agenda has been attributed to a wide range of factors; most noticeably the rise of political opposition in Edgar Tekere's ZUM, and in the critical stance taken by the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), university students and other civil society groups (Moyo, 1992: 31-2). Opposition to the one-party state was part of a growing, wider mobilisation of public antagonism to ZANU-PF rule and the increasingly visible problems of inflation, unemployment, and shortage of public services. The gains made in the 1980's under the developmental policies of the government were slowly reversing, and in the early 1990's the government adopted a 'home grown' Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP), although after severe drought in 1991-2 it was mainly made up of more orthodox, IMF controlled stabilisation measures. The effects on the economy were difficult to defend; increased interest rates and inflation, rapid deindustrialisation, widespread unemployment and a decline in standards of living, and an increase in overall poverty (Raftopoulos, 2001; Bond, 2001; Bond, Manyanya, 2002).

As the effects of the ESAP continued to be felt in the country a rise in public demonstration, labour activism and an increase in civil society organisations took place, and the collective political threat of these increasingly unified voices saw the government become progressively more authoritarian and coercive (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003; Raftopoulos, 2001; Saunders, 2000). As the challenges to ZANU-PF hegemony grew, its claim to historical legitimacy was also contested. The official silence over the massacres in Matabeleland in the 1980's was countered by increasing attention in the independent press to the effects of the violence and the discovery of graves of civilians (Alexander et al, 2000). In 1997 the CCJP report *Breaking the Silence* was published. It was a vivid and detailed look at the conflict, its causes and the far reaching human rights violations that took place, and an explicit challenge to official histories that emphasised national unity. In response Nkomo – whose former troops and supporters were victims of a state-sponsored terror that he then condemned – reportedly burst into the CCJP offices and demanded that all copies be handed to him in the interests of national unity (Werbner, 98: 96). Mugabe, speaking at the funeral of a veteran ZAPU activist, accused the Bishops at the CCJP of threatening national unity and instead called for national forgetting, what Werbner calls imposed 'state buried memory':

'If we dig up the history, then we wreck the nation... and we tear our people apart into factions, into tribes and villagism that will prevail over our nationalism and over the spirit of our sacrifices' (Mugabe, 1997, quoted in Werbner, 1998: 96)

Despite widespread popular insistence on the remembrance of the *gukurahundi*²², and calls for compensation for its victims, the CCJP recommendation of a reconciliation commission and reparations trust has yet to be acknowledged by members of ZANU-PF (CCJP, 1997).

Campaigns for the political and material recognition of hero status continued, galvanised by an emerging image of the 'forgotten hero', a reference to the thousands of ex-combatants who lived in poverty across the country (Kriger, 1995: 157). As well as facing demands for better support of former guerrillas, parliament also came under increasing pressure to address the question 'Who is a hero?' as calls for state recognition of other groups who had contributed to the war effort, like youth, teachers and political prisoners, continued (Kriger, 2006). The identity of *vana vevhu* and the national hero continued to wield important symbolic power in the 1990's, and the Zimbabwean National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), formed in 1989, became a powerful political constituency. The organisation was highly critical of the government, accusing them of neglecting those who had realised the dream of

²² See Alexander, McGregor, Ranger (2000), chapter 11 for details of localised remembrance processes and the often heavy-handed censorship of them by the state, which illustrated that the governments 'rigid, top-down control of the nation's 'heroes' could not easily be relinquished' (2000: 264).

Zimbabwean independence while enriching themselves (Alexander et al, 2000; Alexander, McGregor, 2006; Kriger, 2003, 2006).

A notable characteristic of the ZNLWVA is its cross-party composition. It has successfully united former ZIPRA fighters with their ZANLA adversaries, including former 'dissidents' who, as Alexander and McGregor observe, 'were prepared to ally themselves with their former persecutors under the rubric of a redefined nation' (Alexander, McGregor, 2006: 217). By 'redefined' the authors are pointing to how the ZNLWVA have presented a united image of national heroes who had been economically and politically marginalised by a corrupt government, and in doing so allowed for the return of the 'dissidents' to the nation. As 'forgotten heroes' ex-ZIPRA guerrillas, who after the 1980's violence had encountered significant social and material exclusion, could unite with ex-ZANLA and demand that the government address their mutual marginalisation under the banner of a lost nationalist vision of prosperity and justice²³.

The reinstitutionalisation of the category of 'national hero' in the ZNLWVA under a united identity of 'forgotten national hero' was a significant challenge to the government. The veterans were laying claim to a historic legitimacy previously monopolised by ZANU-PF. In demanding financial compensation, political recognition and land redistribution they were highlighting the failure of the government to adhere to the vision expressed by the nationalist parties during the 1970's, and in doing so asserting ownership of it. The cohesive vision of official national history that garnered sacred legitimacy for the liberation party was being subverted, its hierarchical distinctions broken down. In a highly symbolic act members of the ZNLWVA heckled President Mugabe's Heroes Day speech in 1997 (Alexander et al, 2000: 256).

Mugabe rewarded the veterans a one-off cash payment, an ongoing monthly pension, and a percentage of all newly acquired land for resettlement. This, combined with the military intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998, placed an unsustainable burden on the economy (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2001: 7). The late 1990's also saw an increased number of spontaneous invasions of commercial land, a further expression of grievance in the communal areas at the pace of land reform. The squatters were often evicted and arrested, but continued to justify their occupation on grounds of ancestral right to land and unfulfilled promises of the nationalist movement (Marongwe, 2003). The invasions kept the need for increased land distribution firmly on the political agenda.

Rising civil activism in this period culminated in a popular movement for a more democratically based constitution, and was spearheaded by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a broad alliance of 96

²³ For a more detailed account of how former 'dissidents' came to join the ZNLWVA and their motivations and experiences see Alexander, McGregor (2006).

civil society organisations (Saunders, 2000). The government set up Constitutional Commission which put forward a controversial draft constitution for referendum. In late 1999 the NCA and ZCTU were instrumental in the formation of a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). As Raftopoulos and Hammar (2003) note, the 'emergence of the labour based MDC and a broad alliance of articulate and well organised civil society organisations posed a significant threat to a delegitimized, nationalist driven ZANU-PF leadership'. The MDC, NCA and white commercial farming and business sectors campaigned for a 'no' vote in the referendum, and in February 2000 ZANU-PF lost an electoral challenge for the first time in 20 years of rule.

The political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe deepened after this point. Although widely covered by academic literature and international press it will suffice to give a brief summary of the most defining events and characteristics of the crisis since 2000. A nation-wide series of land invasions took place, first spearheaded by war veterans but subsequently expanded to include party-trained youth militias and security forces²⁴. After ZANU-PF's controversial win in the 2000 parliamentary elections the occupations increased as part of the governments Fast Track resettlement program, with highly partisan land acquisition committees set up to oversee the program (Alexander, 2006: 188-192). The much publicised violence used against white farmers and farm workers continued, and was accompanied by attacks, threats, imprisonment, torture, and disappearances of suspected MDC members or supporters. The scope and intensity of this violence has only intensified around elections, themselves consistently marred by allegations of voter intimidation and electoral fraud.

In a widespread campaign of state-sponsored violence against any opposition to ZANU-PF, attacks were made on local government, businesses, and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and most democratic fora were forcefully monopolised by the ruling party. This included a clampdown on the independent press, including the introduction of draconian legislation on privacy and journalistic freedom, and an undermining of the judiciary by the ruling party through threats, arrests and intimidation. A widespread weakening of state autonomy has seen some state apparatus compromised by allegiance to ZANU-PF, most noticeably the security and intelligence services and key bureaucratic divisions (for all the above see Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003; Raftopoulos, Jackson, 2004; IJR, 2006a, 2006b). This has taken place alongside 'Zimbabwe's catastrophic economic decline', which has seen the disintegration of key industries, widespread unemployment, the withdrawal of foreign aid, rapid inflation rises, fall in

²⁴ Debate remains as to who initiated the invasions. See Moyo, Yeros (2007) for an account that sees the veterans as instigators and an insistence that they be considered a separate constituency to ZANU-PF. Chan (2003) sees the invasions as supported, and anonymously aided, by some in the party, but underlines the initial divisions that they produced by highlighting the different reactions to them by some in the government before consensus emerged in their support. Alexander (2006), and Raftopoulos and Hammar (2003) seem to see them as an instrument of a ZANU-PF aware of upcoming elections and in need of popular support.

currency value, collapse of services, a national food crisis, and massive national debt (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 13; Bond, Manyanya, 2002).

In the first chapter of this study I outlined two dominant and dichotomous positions that are widespread in media commentaries on the crisis. Raftopoulos and Hammar have identified a set of 'core discursive divides that continue to mark the present politics of crisis' which expand on these interpretations. These dichotomies have come to dominate how the crisis is represented in political rhetoric both in Zimbabwe and beyond. They are: a historically sanctioned and racialised policy of land rights and restitution against an ahistorical affirmation of liberal notions of private property, development and good governance; an idea of an indigenous, national subject versus an unraced, 'civic' subject; a radical, Pan-Africanist, anti-imperialist critique of 'the West' versus a focus on universal norms of human rights and neoliberal globalisation (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 17).

The unfolding of the events that constitute the Zimbabwe crisis has been marked by a particular means of interpretation. By this I mean the national discourse has shaped and generated a specific way in which events, practices and political actors are represented and approached. The symbols, narratives and meanings that determine how the crisis is understood are to a large extent consistent with how the national discourse in Zimbabwe has developed, as outlined in previous chapters, but at the time marked differences are apparent. The next section outlines this process, and illustrates how the dichotomies identified by Hammar and Raftopoulos, have both been informed by, and have helped to intensify this system of representation.

'Patriotic History'

In what can now be considered a defining article of post-2000 scholarship on Zimbabwe, Terence Ranger identified what he calls a 'patriotic history'²⁵ that has been propagated by the ruling party and its supporters in the media, and adopted in youth militia training camps and throughout the education system. 'Patriotic history' 'is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition', and in doing so reaffirm the sacred legitimacy of ZANU-PF rule (Ranger, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). As we shall see below, through what Raftopoulos calls the 'monopolisation of history' the ruling party produces new boundaries around nationhood through categories of exclusion that confer static and polarised identities on those considered outside the nation (Raftopoulos, 2003).

The discursive mechanisms underlying the regime's presentation of liberation history are not novel. In a speech on Hero's Day in 2001 Mugabe presents us with a concise portrayal of Zimbabwean national

²⁵ This term is not of Ranger's invention but borrowed from prominent figures in ZANU-PF (Ranger, 2005a)

history, illustrating the revival of a familiar and singular narrative of continuous heroic liberation as the basis of nationhood:

'The year 1890 when our country was invaded and fell under British imperial occupation, began what was the darkest phase of our nation so far. Our essence as a nation indeed lay in our people's resistances of this cruel encroachment and foreign domination that now asserted itself over our land, the 1893 and 1895-7 struggles, and the second and third Chimurengas. All these are dramatic episodes in the story of our nation, episodes that have given a tragic ring to our Independence... But the same episodes have also given us a sense of sacrifice, of purpose, of unity and cohesion... This is indeed our land, our heritage, our sovereignty, for we fought and died for it!' (Mugabe, 2001: 136)

He then goes on to recount a narrative of the 'The Heroes of the First Chimurenga: Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi', the 'Heroes of the Second Chimurenga lying at Heroes Acre', and proclaims the 'The Third Chimurenga', a continuation of the historical battle of 'the Zimbabwean people' against imperialism in order to claim their 'sovereignty' and their 'land' (Mugabe, 2001: 136-9). This narrative was shared with 'the people' in order to make them aware of 'experiences which you and me as the present, living generation may not have lived through, but experiences nevertheless vital to our sense of well being, to our sense of national identity as Zimbabweans'.

The first sentence of the longer excerpt above underlines the reemphasis on a history of the nation that also precedes the series of *Chimurengas*. Here 'our country' existed prior to the arrival of Westerners. In 'patriotic history' Great Zimbabwe is put forward as historical precedent, a time when 'nationhood' and 'the people' existed in a struggle to build civilisation:

'The essence of our nationhood lies in the Historical struggle of our People, initially against nature and the elements, in the process evolving practices and technologies by which they asserted mastery over time... We think of the Great Zimbabwe Monument... as indicative of those great struggles that bore the civilisation which at once preceded but also lead to our present circumstance' (Mugabe, 2001: 133).

In 2003 Mugabe presided over a televised ceremony at the ruins at which one half of the Zimbabwe bird was returned from Berlin. This was the culmination of a campaign overseen by Dr Edward Matenga, curator of the Great Zimbabwe site. Minister of Foreign Affairs Stan Mudenge called Matenga's book on the history of the soapstone birds, in which he expressed his determination to return the bird, an 'authentic national history' (Ranger, 2004: 227). As Matenga puts it:

'The desire [to return the bird] was inspired by the belief that the potency of Great Zimbabwe as the guardian spirit of the nation lies in its possession of sacred artefacts such as the conical tower and the

Zimbabwe birds. It seemed the spirit of the deceased inhabitants of Great Zimbabwe, who had bequeathed to us a wonderful heritage and a name to nationhood, were not going to rest until the birds were removed' (Matenga, 2003, quoted in Fontein, 2006: 220)

The NMMZ, who manage the Great Zimbabwe site, have also taken a leadership role in a new project aimed at the promotion of Zimbabwe's 'Liberation Heritage'. An important part of this has been the exhumation and reburial of war dead from shallow graves in Zimbabwe, as well as from former guerrilla and refugee camps in neighbouring countries, and the rehabilitation of communal graves and memorial shrines at these sites (Fontein, 2009; Shoko, 2006). This project is largely a response to the history of popular demands from former guerrillas, families, spirit mediums and customary authorities for the repatriation and reburial of human remains or symbolic soil, which gained more prominence with the increasing political activism of the veterans in 1990's²⁶.

At one level this effort is different from previous projects of national commemoration, such as the graded system of heroic status at Heroes Acre, in that the NMMZ are working closely alongside local actors, including spirit mediums and war veterans, and in doing so is partly responding 'to ritual demands previously marginalised or excluded by both these state dominated processes at Great Zimbabwe, Heroes Acres and elsewhere' (Fontein, 2009: 16). They complement the government sponsored *bira* ceremonies (held in every chiefdom across the nation in 2006) which sought to thank the ancestors for independence, cleanse the nation's legacy of violence and ask for rain (Fontein, 2009: 16). However they are a clear part of ZANU-PF's effort to reimagine a national past of heroic struggle. As much as the involvement of local authorities and war veterans may reflect their growth in power and importance in the third *Chimurenga* period, the 'Liberation Heritage' project reinscribes specific social categories and historical narratives established in the 1960's and 70's. In fact the wider constituencies involved in the project, and the traditional systems of sacralisation endorsed by it, indirectly echo the hybridisation of the dominant national discourse with local historical discourses in rural mobilisation efforts during the war (see chapter two).

The national history of struggle expounded in the 'patriotic history' of ZANU-PF, spanning from Great Zimbabwe to the third *Chimurenga*, is a vivid and resonant reaffirmation of the histories that galvanised the liberation struggle in the 1960's and 1970's. However, the leading characters in this narrative have to some extent changed. Joshua Nkomo and other ZAPU members are now regarded as 'national heroes',

²⁶ NMMZ is also building a new museum at Heroes Acre, and is involved in a project with the National Archives and the University of Zimbabwe called 'Capturing a faded memory', which aims to collect oral histories of the struggle (Fontein, 2009: 15). It remains to be seen how the individual testimonies collected will fit into the dominant and reductive narrative of patriotic history.

with Nkomo, after his death in 1999, being declared by Mugabe as the 'father of the nation'²⁷. Luis White points out that the increasing focus by ZANU-PF on the broken Lancaster House promise of funds for land reform by the British government, the increasing diplomatic and public antagonism between the countries in the 2000s, and Western support of the MDC, has 'made Britain central to Zimbabwe's history as it never had been before' (White, 2003: 95). As Mugabe observes:

'Remember, Zimbabwe is under attack, our sovereignty is under fire from the very same imperialist forces which took it away from our fore bears more than a century ago... [Zimbabwean heroes have had to] die simply to overcome a supposedly civilised nation which for the greater part of the closing millennium, has chosen to indulge towards us racial hate, animosity and systematic violence as well as organised economic war as a strategy for its latter-day imperialist control and domination of our country' (Mugabe, 2001: 70)

As White notes 'Zimbabwe had been given a history in which it was a British colony until 1980' (White, 2003: 97). But this revisionism is a constant feature of the national discourse, and has been since the 1960's as it expanded to include mythic figures of the past. It allows for the recategorisation of agency into what remains the foundation of this singular national history, the sharp dichotomy between 'the people' and the heroes that represent their sacred destiny of united and sovereign nationhood, and the colonial adversary, whether Western conquerors of traditional society, Rhodesian settler rule or British neo-colonialism. Within these categories Rhodesia elides with Britain, and Nkomo and ZAPU are seamlessly absorbed into an image of a 'united African people' who have historically battled these forces.

What has increasingly alarmed observers of the Zimbabwe crisis is how this history is being widely propagated within the education system. Compulsory classes in history are now standard in lower and higher education and the curriculum has been tailored to 'reconcile' a new generation with their history, to borrow from Shamuyarira's formulation (see chapter two) (Ranger, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Raftopoulos, 2004). In the words of the ZANU-PF Secretary for external affairs in 2004:

'We did not fan the fire of our nation and struggle for independence among our children. That fire almost went out as our children knew nothing of that invaluable history' (Raftopoulos, 2004: 166)

Recent exam questions for the compulsory higher education course called 'National Strategic Studies' included:

²⁷ See Ndlovu-Gatsheni's chapter in Muponde, Muchemwa (2007) for a discussion of the changing representations of Joshua Nkomo in the national discourse from 'father of the dissidents' to his posthumous title of 'father of the nation'.

- 'Which political party represents the interests of imperialists and how must it be viewed by Zimbabweans?'
- 'African leaders who try to serve the interests of imperialists are called what and how do you view patriotism?' (Raftopoulos, 2004: 167)

In the National Youth Service Training Camps (NYSTC's), where many of the youth militias so active in Zimbabwe since the late 1990's were trained, patriotic history is taught by war veterans and party activists, often using anthologies of Mugabe's speeches (Ranger, 2004: 219). These events illustrate how 'patriotic history' has routinely become institutionalised as a dominant official narrative, a part of sustained efforts by ZANU-PF to widen its reach and power.

Territories of the Nation

As noted in chapter three, dominant discourse over land in independent Zimbabwe have revolved around a specific, and often racialised, dichotomy of contrasting rights: on one side is the restitution of rights expressed by African groups in terms of ancestral possession, or for services in the liberation war, on the other the right to land is mediated by questions of developmental utility or constitutionally protected private property. This dichotomy has clouded what has been a complex history of contestation over land use, management, access and control between state authorities, customary rulers, politicians, immigrants and a rising black elite (Alexander, 2006; Rutherford, 2001; Moyo, 1995, 2000, 2007; Drinkwater, 1991).

In the 'patriotic history' narrative the depiction of land does not lend itself to any careful unpicking of these complex issues. Instead land, as Raftopoulos and Hammar note, is presented 'as a signifier of just possession, indigenous location and national belonging [that] has been woven as a central thread into the cloth of the dominant liberation message' (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 19). In this presentation the reclamation of lost land is the most definitive feature of the struggle for independence. As opposed to the recognition of human rights, the need for gender equality, or other campaigns of the nationalist movement, the right to land was enriched with a historical genealogy that placed it as the ultimate telos of the nation:

'We know and still know that the land was the prime goal for King Lobengula as he fought British encroachment in 1893; we knew and still know that land was the principal grievance for our heroes of the First Chimurenga, led by Nehanda and Kaguvi. We know and still know it to be the fundamental premise of the Second Chimurenga and thus a principal definer of the succeeding new Nation and State of Zimbabwe. Indeed we know it to be the core issue and imperative of the Third Chimurenga which you and me are fighting, and for which we continue to make such enormous sacrifices' (Mugabe, 2001: 92-3)

This depiction necessarily obscures the historical complexities of land ownership and rights, as well as the inconsistencies in the ruling party's policy agenda towards it. It instead sustains the dichotomy outlined above, but, more than that, it fixes land as a territorial boundary of Zimbabwean nationhood. As Chenjerai Hunzvi, the leader of the war veterans, defended the land occupiers as 'Zimbabweans on Zimbabwean land', he explicitly set forth limits on who, and on what grounds, is belonging of the nation (Chan, Primorac, 2004: 71).

If the land, or the rural areas, are Zimbabwe, then urban Zimbabwe has come to be redefined as a territorial location not quite of Zimbabwe itself. The MDC has traditionally garnered much of its support from Harare, Bulawayo and other urban locations, and during the 1990's urban residents were increasingly joining new social organisations and seeking different forms of social representation than the nationalist parties (Raftopoulos, 1994: 19-20). Challenges to ZANU-PF allegiance have been translated into challenges to the nation, in which rural location is a key criterion of nationhood, as exemplified by The Deputy Minister of Industry and International Trade Phineas Chihota in 2005:

'The definition of an indigenous person is one who has a rural home allocated to him by virtue of being indigenous, and a home that one has acquired in an urban area because it has been bought or it has been allocated to him by the State' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 182)

During an election rally in 2000 Mugabe singled out Harare residents as being 'undisciplined, totemless elements of alien origin'. In 2004 he attempted to invite them back into the nation, the implication being that loyalty to ZANU-PF constitutes nationhood:

'You are Zimbabweans, you belong to Zimbabwe which was brought by the blood of our heroes lying here and other scattered throughout the country. Should we give it away to sell-outs-here in Harare? This is our capital city. You are sons and daughters of revolutionaries. What wrong have we done you? Harare: think again, think again, think again!' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 28)

A certain uncomfortable ambiguity has developed in defining the boundaries between what is presented in this discourse as a traditional, sacred, rural space predominantly supportive of the ruling party, and a Westernised and socially diverse urban space that favours the opposition. This discursive territorialisation of nationhood seemed to form part of the logic behind *Operation Murambatsvina*, launched in May 2005 as a means to curtail informal trade and illegal settlement in urban areas. *Murambatsvina* saw homes and informal businesses destroyed, and thousands of urban workers dispossessed and displaced (Vambe, 2008).

Categories of Exclusion

As previously observed, the national discourse establishes the boundaries of national formation. The limits of citizenship, and the rights that it entails, are constructed along the discursive boundaries of historical narratives and spoken collectivities. Identities are imagined and reified, and political legitimacy bestowed. In post-2000 Zimbabwe the status of the 'war hero' remains a privileged category, witnessed in the importance of veterans in justifying the land invasions and their presence in the land committees and other bureaucratic structures²⁸. The ZANU-PF 'Green Bombers', 'patriotised' from their time in the NYSTC's are considered 'new heroes' in this schema, and along with the veterans constitute a kind of 'super citizen' (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 26). To some extent this has endowed them with a different kind of rights, or at least made them immune from legal restrictions usually placed on citizens, as witnessed in the pardon granted to all those involved in political violence before the 2000 elections, and the chronic lack of prosecution of those responsible for much of the violence during the decade (Worby, 2003: 68).

The new 'Liberation History' project has entailed a more inclusive form of state sacralisation, but the hierarchy of heroic nationhood at Heroes Acre continues to permanently inscribe as inviolable the heroic status of key figures from the national elites. Recent burials have been marred by controversy over the 'national hero' credentials of those chosen for commemoration. These have included the 2001 burials of former Minister of Youth Border Gezi, who set up the NYSTC's, and Chenjerai 'Hitler' Hunzvi (Mugabe, 2001: 141-3; Fontein, 2009: 12).

As much as discourses of national history and commemoration map out inclusive and unequal ideas of nationhood, they also produce categories of exclusion. Upon his death in 2000 Ndabaningi Sithole, the first leader of ZANU who since his role in the internal settlement process in the late 1970's had become a staunch opponent of Mugabe, was excluded from burial at Heroes Acre (Fontein, 2009: 12). A ZANU-PF Department of Information and Publicity Document entitled *Traitors do Much Damage to National Goals* provides a history of how 'traitors', or 'sell outs', who 'sell out the course of [their] people to an enemy that would have forcefully vanquished and taken over the peoples heritage, self-respect, rights and dignity' (ZANU-PF, 2005: 1). Echoed in much rhetoric from the ruling party and its allies, this document constructs a specific social category of 'sell-out', one who has not betrayed a party or movement, but 'the people' themselves. Sithole is portrayed as someone who through his American education had been 'groomed to do the dirty work' of subverting the nationalist struggle. He is 'a devious leader' of a breakaway ZANU faction, who had 'turned into one of the worst traitors of the struggle to liberate Zimbabwe, Africa and indeed the black race' (ZANU-PF, 2005: 10-16). In this document modern

²⁸ The debates around 'Who is a war hero?' remain a powerful source of contest, with questions of heroic authenticity repeatedly raised about 'supposed' war veterans, especially those working in groups who oppose the government (Kriger, 2003: 192-4).

manifestations of the 'sell out' include Morgan Tsvangirai, the head of the CCJP Pius Ncube, and prominent MDC member Welshman Ncube.

The nation-space is presented as compromised by the figure of the 'sell out', a signifier that fixes those it is bestowed upon as excluded from not just a place within the nation, but also from the rights and privileges that nationhood entails. As with the *gukurahundi* in the 1980's and opposition forces post-2000, those depicted as outside the nation often relinquish any legal protection from state-orchestrated or popular violence, and are often the targets of it. In the third *Chimurenga* the categories of this exclusion have been centred historically on a conflation of race and (neo)-colonialism, whiteness and Britishness. I also observe how absence from the narratives of national history is itself a form of exclusion.

An Excluded Opposition

The oft-quoted excerpt from a speech made by Mugabe below is perhaps the most useful summation of the how the MDC have been discursively located in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Its eloquence may distinguish it from the often cruder denunciations of the Zimbabwean opposition movement, but the logic behind it remains the same:

'Often a myth is peddled that ZANU-PF lost to a 9 month old opposition party. Nothing can be further from the truth... The MDC should never be judged or characterised by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its salaried black suburban junior professionals; never by its rough and violent high-density lumpen elements. It is much deeper than these human superfluous; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesteryear and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule. The MDC is as old and as strong as the forces that control it; that converges on it and controls it; that drives and direct; indeed that support, sponsor and spot it. It is a counter revolutionary Trojan horse contrived and nurtured by the very inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday.' (Mugabe, 2001: 88-9)

Here the MDC is fixed as immovably outside the nation, but also as fixed within history. It is presented as 'implacably' part of the same forces that sought to prevent national self-determination, a mere instrument of a longer historical mission to derail Zimbabwean independence. But the saliency of this image can only be understood in light of more recent events in Zimbabwe.

Much of the MDC leadership had its origins in the Zimbabwean trade union movement, and initially the party's ideological leanings reflected this genealogy, with a strong emphasis on social democratic policies geared towards more equitable distribution of capital, technology, and skills, increased democratic participation, and a general commitment towards working class interests (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003;

Bond, 2001; Bond, Manyanya, 2002). However in a movement whose demographic includes numerous civil society organisations and figures from the white business sector, and as the MDC sought foreign donor support from the IFI's and powerful Western think tanks such as Freedom House, it moved more towards a neo-liberal platform that stressed market oriented reform such as widespread privatisation, albeit tempered by a commitment to meeting basic needs²⁹. In the process the MDC critique of ZANU-PF has dovetailed with that of Western governments, international organisations and much media commentary, centring on an exhortation of liberal notions of private property, human rights and the rule of law, good governance and an idea of an unraced, democratic citizenry.

At the same time some of the MDC leadership, and parts of its support base, is white. In contrast to the racialised language of ZANU-PF the universalism of the MDC's democratic rhetoric was openly inclusive, and as white interests came increasingly under threat the party offered a means to contest the threat to private property rights (IJR, 2006: 19). Needless to say the ahistorical presentation of a democratic citizenry allowed a form of political representation that cleansed whites of their historical connotations with colonialism and settler rule. With the MDC a viable opposition party the 'anti-memory' that suppressed the image of the white settler didn't have to rely on unified loyalty to ZANU-PF and a withdrawal from public politics. In 2000, in lieu of white support for the 'no vote', and white membership of the MDC, Mugabe publically revoked the reconciliation policy of the 1980's, stating that 'the national reconciliation policy we adopted in 1980 is threatened, gravely threatened, by the acts of the white settlers in this country and we shall revoke that national reconciliation, we shall revoke it' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 138). In doing so he relinquished the constraints of 'anti-memory', and as in the 1980's with the CAZ and ZUM, white political activism drew forth representations of white identity built around the historical liberation narrative. As the infamous Dr. Jonathan Moyo, then Secretary of State for Information, said in 2001:

'White farmers, who were killing my comrades, now become a party – and call this democracy? Do you think Jews will sit with former Nazis? We will not be foolish and pretend we don't know what you were doing yesterday... The MDC is a front for white Rhodesians' (Rutherford, 2004: 556)

This is the context by which we can understand the representation of the MDC as 'sell-outs', as outside the boundaries of the imagined nation. The MDC have become associated with an ideological position often characterised as neo-imperialism and that rejects the premise of ZANU-PF rule and land

²⁹ Bond and Manyanya highlight the influence of industrialist Eddie Cross in this development, and locates the MDC's policy position in a history of a white petit-bourgeoisie politics in Rhodesia which has often contested the interests of foreign capital, and 'combines 'conservative' economic policies that meet the needs of the white-dominated big business sector, with the memory of state support for a then-white, now-black working class' (Bond, Manyanya, 2002: 87-106)

restitution. Such representation is part of the larger dichotomies identified earlier in this chapter. The liberal critique of ZANU-PF rule is presented as directly opposed to an interpretive framework that recognises indigenous and historical rights to land, valorises the heroism of historical struggle and bases political legitimacy on historical contribution to the nationalist struggle. This is what Ranger has termed, in a nod to Fukuyama's thesis on the inevitability of the dominance of universal liberal capitalism, 'history versus 'the end of history'' (Ranger, 2004: 220). If the 'end of history' implies a universalism that cannot recognise the historical rights to land, and to power, then 'history' is the wielding of historical narratives that seek to counter this critique by presenting a depiction of national history and a register of national belonging couched in historically resonant representations.

Exclusion by Absence

As pointed out above, representations of the MDC or whites remain moored upon a historical dichotomy between 'the people' as defined by their representatives, the nationalist parties, and the colonial adversary, those who seek to obstruct the national destiny. In post-2000 Zimbabwe white people are presented as non-indigenous 'sons of Britain'. In terms of belonging they are located in the colonial era, and their identity is characterised as such. On his revocation of the reconciliation policy Mugabe said that:

'when you show mercy to those who are hard hearted, when you show non-racialism to die-hard racists; when you show a people with a culture – false culture of superiority based on their skin – and you do nothing to get them to change their personality, their perceptions, their mind, you are acting as a fool' (Gandhi and Jambaya, 2002: 9)

This discourse around national exclusion, resting on a conflation of whiteness and Britishness, was acted out in the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act of 2001, which required all those seeking to retain or acquire citizenship to renounce all foreign citizenship or entitlement to it. The exercising of citizenry rights became subject to nationality, and the result was the disenfranchisement of many white Zimbabweans and farm workers suspected of supporting the MDC.

The farm workers, who are mainly immigrants from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia and their descendents, mostly came to the country as economic migrants during colonial rule when the Rhodesian state faced a shortage of labour. They are estimated to be over two million in number, forming about 15% of the population (Muzondidya, 2007: 326). They, along with the relatively small population of Zimbabweans of coloured and Asian origin, are an example of how national exclusion is not always explicit and instead can be constituted by an absence of representation. These groups, who Muzondidya terms 'invisible subject minorities', have been characterised by a distinct lack of representation in the dominant national narrative of liberation (Muzondidya, 2004, 2005, 2007; Rutherford, 2001, 2008;

Sachikonye, 2003). Their status as part of 'the people' is rarely elucidated by nationalist elites and they lack any national political representation.

Under colonial rule farm workers were categorised as 'colonial native' as opposed to 'aboriginal native', and coloureds and Asians as 'colonial subjects', and accorded differing rights and privileges according to these categorisations. Although in post-independence Zimbabwe these categories were maintained for electoral and administrative efficacy, race and ethnicity was no longer used for the allocation of rights and resources. However both of these groups have been broadly excluded from policies aimed at the restructuring of society's racial divisions. Policies of Africanisation of the civil service, land reform, and empowerment have been centred on the unequal division between whites and 'indigenous' Africans, and 'have not only been conspicuously silent on the position and status of subject minorities, but have also lacked clarity and conviction with regard to them' (Muzondidya, 2004: 223). Rutherford notes that farm workers – and the same can be said to a certain extent of coloureds and Asians – have 'a liminal identity within the entrenched official imagination of Zimbabwe... and [have] been marginalised from development policies, political rights, and social programmes' (Rutherford, 2001: 3-4)³⁰.

With this quote Rutherford is alerting us to the importance of understanding how the dominant imagining of Zimbabwe finds expression in institutional arrangements and political practices. How 'the people' are represented, through historical narrative and the presentation of identity, lays down the boundaries of nationhood, which in turn has implications for the exercising of rights and allocation of resources. In the third *Chimurenga* 'subject minorities', like whites and supporters of the MDC, have faced increased discrimination. Coloured people have frequently been labelled as white by both supporter of ZANU-PF and members of the government, and have been marginalised from the land reform process. In 2002 Indian businesses were threatened with seizure by a radical group of war veterans, whose leaflets stated that:

'Black people did not die for this country so Indians could go on oppressing them... It is our land. We fought for it. It belongs to us' (Muzondidya, 2004: 229)

Farm workers, subject to long-held views that they collaborate with white farmers and are non-indigenous aliens, have faced widespread violence and dispossession, and by 2003 over two thirds had been aggressively displaced. Only 5% of them have been resettled under the Fast Track Programme (Muzondidya, 2007: 336).

³⁰ For the purposes of summation I am perhaps guilty of conflating the experiences of farm workers with those of coloureds and Asians, and I have attempted to stretch the generalisation of their experiences to an appropriate and responsible level. For a more in-depth study of the status and history of farm workers please see Rutherford, 2001 and 2008, and Sachikonye, 2003. For a social history of coloured Zimbabweans see Muzondidya, 2005.

'The People' as Natives

The above discussion of exclusion outlines how the national discourse excludes the imagination of certain collectivities. Instead of white Zimbabweans or Zimbabwean farm workers from Zambia we are presented with 'sons of Britain' and Zambian farm workers. This begs the question that if this is who 'the people' aren't, who are 'the people'? As Muzondidya notes:

'... the nation state has increasingly been conceived as the political expression of a single or a dominant and relatively homogenous group: 'native Africans'. In the historical text/narrative that has emerged, only 'native Africans' or *vana vevhu / abantwana bomhlabathi* ('children of the soil'), have been projected not only as the original and true inhabitants of Zimbabwe but also as having pre-eminent rights over the country's land and other resources' (Muzondidya, 2004: 225)

Of course this is not a novel development. As noted in chapter one the original representations of the Zimbabwean people by the nationalist parties relied on an under-developed and essentialised image of a unified African collectivity. The Africanism of the nationalist parties in the 1960's and 1970's was pronounced, and cultural authenticity was performed in the valorisation of African tradition, ritual, music and dress. A narrative emerged of an 'African' people building a great civilisation at Great Zimbabwe. A 'silence' over ethnicity was discursively established that didn't allow for the destabilisation of the idea of the 'indigenous black Zimbabwean'. The Zimbabwean native African was an established social category within the national discourse.

In the third Chimurenga this primordial idea of the native has powerfully re-emerged into public political rhetoric, fuelled by the sharp distinctions drawn between European liberalism and citizenship and ZANU-PF's insistence on the ancestral right to African land in the face of imperialism. The image of the 'unified African' has become a signifier of African consciousness, culture and self-determination. It has signalled a return to radical Africanism as the basis for ZANU-PF's controversial redistributive politics. In 2000 Mugabe unequivocally declared that:

'This country is our country and this land is our land... They think because they are white they have a divine right to our resources. Not here. The white man is not indigenous to Africa. Africa is for Africans. Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 174)

A 2002 report by the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe analysed the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporations Vision 30 project, which sought to ensure that the majority of broadcasting material was of Zimbabwean origin and content, particularly focussing on programmes like *National Ethos*,

which sought to address 'national values and the country's cultural values' (Gandhi, Jambaya, 2002: 2). *National Ethos* and the Vision 30 project were part of a wider campaign that sought to celebrate Zimbabwean and African culture, and included cultural galas and musical recordings coordinated by the Department of Information and Publicity in the President's Office. The report noted that:

'... the panellists' definition of nation did not appear to cater for identity in terms of being Zimbabwean, that is a people staying within the specific boundaries of Zimbabwe... Zimbabwe's nationhood appeared to be subsumed under that of Africa, as witnessed by the constant reference to 'African' rather than Zimbabwean' (Gandhi, Jambaya, 2002: 5)

In an evocation of Pan-Africanist history Zimbabwean 'African' identity is constantly linked to the history of slavery, of radical African-American figures like Malcom X, and to black resistance movements in the Americas³¹. This 'African' identity is continually counterpoised to a similarly narrow and restrictive idea of 'Whiteness' or of the 'European'. As one party intellectual on *National Ethos* observed:

'Since the value system of the Europeans, of the White man, of the Rhodesians in Zimbabwe is exclusive, it is racist, it does not have a place for us... we should come up with this kind of ethos; Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans, Africa for Africans, Europe for Europeans' (Gandhi, Jambaya, 2002: 8)

This proclamation of native autochthony has become a centrepiece in the division between the values of the third *Chimurenga* and those of the liberal critique of it. To put it differently the idea of the primordial native African is presented as inimical to that of Western liberal values. As Professor Tafataona Mahoso, a staunch supporter of the third *Chimurenga* and a powerful commentator on Zimbabwean politics, puts it

'Mugabe is now every African who is opposed to the British and North American plunder and exploitation... So, old Mugabe here is not the person of Robert Mugabe. Rather it is that powerful, elemental African memory going back to the first Nehanda and even to the ancient Egyptians and Ethiopians who are now reclaiming Africa in history as the cradle of humankind... The Zimbabwe opposition and their British, European and North American sponsors have exposed themselves as forces opposed to Mugabe as Pan-African memory, Mugabe as the reclamer of African space, Mugabe as the African power of remembering the African legacy and African heritage which slavery, apartheid and imperialism thought they had dismembered for good... What the West takes for memory is mechanical recall, superficial regurgitation of formulaic catechisms which are taken out of context because they must

³¹ ZANU-PF has in fact cultivated links with various radical black and ethnic minority civil groups in the USA, Europe and Australia, as part of this widening of the national discourse into a Pan-African solidarity (Raftopoulos, 2004: 170-3).

be both uni-polar (centralised) and globalised – rule of law, transparency, free enterprise and human rights’ (Ranger, 2004: 222)

Here Mugabe, and the third *Chimurenga*, is a metonym for the broader realisation of a distinctive mode of being, the authentic ‘African’. The nation is subsumed under a broader Pan-African movement that seeks to ‘remember’ the spiritual and cultural essence of the African native. The national subject is at once the African subject, a unified body represented as inalienably unique and separate from any other culture or social category. The historical narrative of the national discourse is presented as a composite feature of a wider history of oppression and exploitation that spans ‘slavery, apartheid and imperialism’. The national discourse has in this sense widened to a Pan-African vision of African self-determination and particularism, but the edification of this mode of interpretation is reliant on an insularity. It is established on a simplistic and narrow division between what are presented as two distinct cultures and ideologies, the ‘white’ imperialist and the ‘African’ native. This not only prevents the imagination of different collectivities within each culture, but also forecloses any discussion of a complex hybridisation between them.

Conclusion

The period of the third *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe, and more specifically the nature of official nationalism within it, cannot be regarded as entirely historically distinct. In fact what we have witnessed is a not exactly a return of already established national identities, narratives and images, but their intensification. By intensification I mean, to a large extent, the dominance of their usage as a means of interpreting and understanding the events of the Zimbabwe crisis. If the dominant national discourse in the past has had to share discursive space, and had been tempered by, liberal ideas of citizenship and human rights, in post-2000 Zimbabwe it has achieved a more hegemonic status amongst the national elites. The context of this intensification has been a political climate that in much commentary and political rhetoric has been reduced to a set of polarities and antagonisms. On one side is a radical redistributive politics justified on historical and nativistic grounds, on the other universal liberal ideas of human rights, the rule of law and citizenship often conflated with neo-imperialism.

This dichotomy has amplified the resonance of a historical narrative of national history that has always been centred on the struggle between ‘the people’, including their national heroes and legitimate leaders, and a colonial adversary. The identities this narrative celebrates have again garnered important political currency. The prominence of the ZNLWVA in the events leading up to the land invasions, and the self-identification of ZANU-PF rule as historically legitimised pay testament to this fact. Perhaps even more central has been the enduring image of the land as a place of ancestral possession. Largely unshackled by expectations of developmental utility the conception of land as indigenous right has become of

paramount importance to the justification of the ZANU-PF's politics. If before a technical, unraced idea of land and private property remained the basis of land reform in Zimbabwe the national discourse around indigenous location has changed how rights to land are understood in post-2000 policy.

Exclusion, whether through explicit representation of historical identity or its absence, remains a central machination of the national discourse in Zimbabwe. The nationalist elites who maintain the presentation of this discourse, and who through the politics of exclusion practice it, are its authors. It is this feature, the authoring of exclusion, the deciding of who *is* or *isn't* of the nation, that has also remained a central part of how the nation of Zimbabwe is imagined³². In the 1980's the people of Matabeleland found themselves subject to this discursive authority, and the logic behind their representation as part of a tribeless, homogenous Zimbabwe remains the same in the third *Chimurenga*. Firstly, a nationalist party must by implication represent the entire nation, and so it must provide an idea of who 'the people' are, and are not. Secondly, the *right* to do so, and act upon, that representation, comes from the identity of the party itself as historically legitimate bearers of Zimbabwe's destiny. In this case we are reminded of the slogan ZANU-PF VANHU, VANHU IZANU-PF (ZANU-PF is the people, the people are ZANU-PF): being of ZANU-PF is being of the nation.

But being of the nation in the third *Chimurenga* has come to mean something more than being simply loyal to ZANU-PF. Building on already established images of a 'unified' and authentic African collectivity that emerged in the Africanist leanings of the nationalist movement in the 1960's and 1970's, 'the people' has become short hand for an essentialised, Pan-African native subject. The representation of an 'African' native as unique and alien to Western racist culture is a further demonstration of how the political polarities that have emerged in post-2000 Zimbabwe have intensified the social categories constructed within the national discourse. In the third *Chimurenga* the national subject is not only black, and so negates the idea of a non-racial Zimbabwe, but is also presented as culturally and politically inimical to universalist politics.

³² See Worby (2003) for a sophisticated and insightful discussion on the relation between sovereignty, modernity and national exclusion in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

Before independence in 1980, a certain way of thinking about ideas of the nation and nationhood had already been established. With the emergence of mass nationalism in the 1960's came a seemingly contradictory way of defining who 'the people' of Zimbabwe are. In one sense Zimbabwe was conceived of as a future democratic community, a collectivity in which Zimbabwe-ness presided over other forms of identity, whether racial, ethnic or of associational membership. This democratic discourse, reflecting the political goals of the nationalist movement to establish a one-man one-vote system in the country, was complicated by a conception of 'the people' as 'united Africans', an emphasis on the 'African character' of the nation. This essentialised notion of the 'African' was enriched by, and fixed within, a specific history of the nation, a narrative of how 'an African people' have since the time of Great Zimbabwe fought against a colonial adversary in order to realise their national destiny of self-determination.

This historical narrative has a territorial dimension. It presents a certain depiction of land, invested with indigenous belonging and sacred authority, and in doing so allows for a different conception of rights to land and land redistribution.

This narrative also extols the identity of the 'national hero', a powerful social and political category reified by elite processes of national sacralisation. This has created a discursive terrain in which political legitimacy and authority can be contested. Through reference to 'heroic' status ZANU-PF rule has consistently been challenged, by both ZAPU and the 'forgotten heroes' of the 1980's and 90's. At the same time it has legitimised the rule of ZANU-PF by placing it at the head of a hierarchy of national historical authority, the natural heirs to previous 'national heroic leaders' like Nehanda and Kaguvi.

As the national discourse has ordained ZANU-PF with historical and spiritual legitimacy, it has created a certain logic of representation, a way of understanding 'national unity'. Most visibly emerging in the 1980's, it implies that if ZANU-PF are the rightful leaders of 'the people', then their representation of 'the people' is valid, and can be acted upon. In this sense unity becomes not only a case of 'a people united through being Zimbabwean' but also as 'united in the support of the party that speaks on behalf of the Zimbabwean people, that represents them, and legitimately defines their historical destiny'. Identification with ZANU-PF becomes identification with the people. Political challenges to ZANU-PF rule are thus from outside 'the nation', not representative of 'the people'. Just as the authority to practice these exclusions comes from the narrative of liberation history, the way in which these exclusions are represented reflect social categories established within it: ethnic identities that run counter to an idea of a 'united African people', or representations of a 'colonial adversary', a manifestation of imperialism and racism.

These features of the national discourse have intensified during the Zimbabwe crisis, both reinforcing and helping to produce the 'core discursive divides that continue to mark the present politics of crisis' (Hammar, Raftopoulos, 2003: 17). They have through history produced and delimited what it means to be Zimbabwean, and what it means to lead the Zimbabwean people. It reduces and simplifies historical representation, how Zimbabwean history can be thought about and used to understand the present. And it restricts, or at least alters, conventional understandings of rights, citizenship and justice, and the constitution of political legitimacy.

One has to contemplate whether this is a situation specific to Zimbabwe. I would like here to quote Moeletsi Mbeki at length from an article he wrote in *The Sunday Tribune* in February 2008 in which he sought to address what he saw as the inaction towards and tolerance of the ZANU-PF government by Southern African states:

'Southern Africa is unique in Africa in that most of its countries are still ruled by nationalist parties that fought against colonialism. These ruling parties: Zanu PF in Zimbabwe; MPLA in Angola; CCM in Tanzania; Frelimo in Mozambique; BDP in Botswana; ANC in SA; or Swapo in Namibia, consider themselves to be entitled to rule their countries forever by virtue of having struggled against colonialism... All this is, of course, shortsighted and largely futile. Nationalist parties and their governments in Southern Africa can no more stop the march of progress and history any more than the colonialists before them could' (Mbeki, 2008)

Although it is not the aim of my research to use the particular nature of national discourse in Zimbabwe to explain the actions of Southern African governments regarding the crisis, I feel that Mbeki highlights an important feature of the battle for power occurring in the country. Zimbabwe is the first Southern African country to experience an opposition party founded after the fall of colonialism that garners popular support and stands a real chance of democratically usurping the incumbent nationalist party that liberated the country from colonialism. Thus the struggle for power in Zimbabwe is, as Mbeki highlights, an important precedent for the entire region.

Needless to say the claims made by the national discourse in Zimbabwe are often cited as important in understanding the popularity Mugabe still has amongst African political leaders, especially in the face of criticism that continental efforts to try and resolve the Zimbabwe crisis have been a case of tragic inaction and apologism. As Raftopoulos and Phimister note in their important article on the subject:

'At the heart of President Robert Mugabe's offensive against the array of forces opposed to his rule are repeated attempts to place the Zimbabwe problem at the centre of a larger anti-imperialist and Pan-African position... The land question in particular has been located within a discourse of legitimate

redress for colonial injustice, language which has resonated on the African continent, and within the Third World more generally. Knowing that his authoritarian rule would be confronted with widespread national and international critique centred on property rights, human rights and the rule of law, Mugabe and his advisors constructed alternative discourses around the need for renewed liberation struggle solidarity, the continuing effects of marginalisation attendant on the globalisation process, and presumptions of liberal imperialism' (Raftopolos, Phimister, 2004a: 1)

In South Africa in particular one can make some casual observations. When you hear how Julius Malema, leader of the ANC Youth League represents the Democratic Alliance as an imperialistic force led by a 'white madam' and her 'servants', or when Jacob Zuma talks about black and Afrikaner South Africans as having one passport as opposed to English South Africans having two, you cannot help but wonder about the importance of representation and notions of authenticity in South African politics. The creation of a ministry specifically mandated to deal with issues pertaining to former combatants of the struggle also draws interesting, if incomplete, parallels.

I feel that this is an area of investigation that needs to be addressed by scholars of Southern Africa today. We need to be able to understand how nationalist movements that remain in power present history, how they define 'the people', and how these representations inflect political practice. I have attempted to illustrate how nationalism in Zimbabwe was both a set of political aims and ambitions, but also a way of representing national collectivity and culture, of discursively mapping a Zimbabwean 'people'. This has entailed drawing on discourses of authenticity and indigenous subjectivity, an idea of a primordial 'African' people. Bhabha and Chatterjee have outlined the importance of realising the 'difference' between post-colonial and Western nationalism with their studies on Southern Asia. Perhaps it is here, in the representation of a nebulous and prior presence, that we can begin to locate this 'difference' in Southern African nationalisms? This of course requires further critical interrogation and study. If anything the Zimbabwe crisis, and the effects it has had on people within the country, underlines the importance of this endeavour.

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